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# ECHOES

justice, peace and creation news

## The Earth as Mother

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# Echoes From Elsewhere

## An Introduction To Echoes Magazine In Reactions, Facts and Issues From All Over The World

*In September, Piet Riksman of Zwijndrecht, the Netherlands, sent a letter to Bert Boer after reading Martin Robra's article "Watch Out!" in the last issue of Echoes (15/1999).*

*Writing on behalf of the diaconal committee of the Netherlands Reformed Church in the Dutch province of South Holland, Mr Riksman said he had read Robra's article with "mounting surprise and disquiet".*

*"Aside from all the detrimental consequences for developing countries, and especially the poor part of their populations" of current World Bank and IMF policies, he was concerned that it now seems to be the intention of these global financial institutions, through their Comprehensive Development Framework (CDF), to influence the churches' development programmes as well.*

*Describing this as an "unacceptable prospect", Mr Riksman asked Mr Boer if he indeed shares the impression given by the article regarding the dangerous implications of the CDF for the work of church-related development agencies – and if so what the churches can do to counter this.*

*The text of Mr Boer's reply, which follows, continues the discussion begun in Martin Robra's article.*

Dear Piet,

Your letter of September 1999, in reaction to the article "Watch Out!" in ECHOES nr. 15, really points to important developments on a global level which may have great impact on the position of poor countries and especially the masses of poor people in those countries.

There is indeed a growing tendency with global institutions to coordinate developmental efforts, both the multilateral (World Bank, UNDP, IMF) and the bilateral (country to country) development aid relations. It depends on how you evaluate both intentions and practice of those efforts to coordinate. Those who can only see e.g. The World Bank as "the enemy of the poor" most certainly will assume that the Comprehensive Development Framework is intended not only to coordinate the developmental efforts of global institutions and national governments.

Others, I do belong to them, see the need for this kind of coordination and for a constructive role of these global institutions. Development aid both from national governments, from multilateral bodies and even from NGOs is still far from taking positive effects in many countries, just because there is a dangerous lack of coordination of all developmental efforts in those countries. We all know how the doors are wide open for a practice of development aid that is just aimed at serving national interests of donor countries, inviting corruption, supporting the wrong elements in the political scene in the respective countries, giving opportunities for the local government to divide the donor countries. The global institutions are represented in those countries just as "agencies". They could do much better in assuming the role of coordinators and strategists as a reasonable alternative to the present practice of letting so many billion of dollars disappear every year in the hands of corrupted and inefficient structures in countries with bad governance. There is a strong need for more coherence between donor countries amongst themselves, between developmental policies and foreign policies, between international institutions and local governments in developing countries. I do not agree with the doom scenario designed in the ECHOES article and would rather like to see us in the ecumenical family to be alert on the direction World Bank (and IMF) is heading and to be in constant and critical dialogue on this. This can only be done in a credible and effective way with the involvement and help of economists who are willing to put their skills in the service of furthering social justice.

**Do we have to trust the intentions of the World Bank in setting up its Comprehensive Development Framework?** I would say: not more than we, the people in the South and in the North, can see and control. In other words, global monetary institutions like the World Bank need to become transparent and more accountable to the world community. They do need a clear set of criteria and values to be adhered to, not only of monetary and economic nature, but evenhandedly social, humanitarian, democratic, ethical values. There has been a growing awareness in international monetary and business circles that even in terms of cost benefit analysis the obedience to these values and principles is profitable for the long term and that it is the duty of the international community to help safeguard the interests of the respective nations against the short term thinking of the corrupt political and military leaders and their allies in international business circles (military equipment, gold, diamonds, drugs, oil interests) that leads to long term destruction and destabilization.

**Will CDF be the end of civil society and of ecumenical development cooperation?**

I really cannot see happening what is depicted in the ECHOES article as a result of the CDF pilot. Civil society is widely seen as indispensable in the building up of a sustainable society. The contrary may be the case: if the World Bank is serious in wanting to put its resources in the service of real inclusive development (democracy, human rights, social economy), then the need for a strong civil society in the developing countries, including the organizations of the poor and downtrodden, will appear to be of great importance. It seems to be more fruitful to me to be in critical but constructive dialogue with both national governments of giving and receiving countries and with the international institutions on the important question: how can we, churches and ecumenical NGOs, in our own role and responsibilities, contribute to the much needed coherence in development policies?

Therefore I would say: let us see how the World Bank does its pilot on de CDF, provided that we, as ecumenical family, are ready and able to monitor in a critical, not on forehand hostile, way what it will aim at and where it will lead to.

Warm greetings,

*Bert Boer*
*Global Ministries of the Uniting Churches in the Netherlands*

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# Editorial

**Echoes**
justice, peace and creation news

Echoes is an occasional publication of the World Council of Churches' cluster on "Issues and Themes", Justice, Peace and Creation team.

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## The Earth as Mother
## Birthing and Sustaining Life

In the quest for faithful approaches to understanding and responding to the theme of Justice, Peace and the Integrity of Creation, a document entitled "Theology of Life" was developed. This theological framework had an impact on the programmatic life of the WCC in the period leading up to the Eighth Assembly in Harare. There is continuing work on this theme into the new millennium. A draft statement prepared for the meeting of the WCC's Central Committee (August 1999) explores the implications for people of faith who share the "earth as home". The statement suggests that we affirm a "spirituality that is faithful to the voice of the earth and the children of the earth".

This edition of *ECHOES* give us, as Indigenous Peoples, an opportunity to present our ideas. There have been many articles in ECHOES that addressed the injustice related to the exploitation of people and the degradation of the environment. The previous issue examined the issues raised by global capitalism.

The global link between Indigenous Peoples is that we are aware of our relationship to the land and water of our territories. It is unfortunately also true that most of us share the experience of having been driven out of our places or denied access to that which is ours for life.

It is true that when an Indigenous person reflects on their life experience from anywhere in the world, there is resonance for us on the other side of the earth. The WCC has supported delegations of Indigenous Peoples who travel to Geneva for meetings with representatives of the United Nations. There is increasing momentum in the struggle for justice in addressing historic issues impacting on Indigenous Peoples.

The Harare assembly was an occasion to celebrate the increasing involvement of Indigenous Peoples in the WCC. Three years of lobbying our churches resulted in more than twenty of us traveling to Harare as delegates and advisors. We met separately for orientation prior to the assembly and consulted regularly to assess how our concerns were being addressed. The full participation of Indigenous Peoples in the WCC continues to be a challenge.

The WCC's Central Committee adopted a statement entitled "Toward a Common Understanding and Vision" in September 1997. Its second affirmation indicates that after fifty years of existence of the WCC "there are many signs of growth toward Christian unity". It is said of member churches that "They have challenged each other to replace old bonds of dominance and dependence by new forms of partnership." This is good news for Indigenous Peoples!

*Stan McKay, Cree Nation,*
*moderator of the Justice, Peace & Creation advisory group*

# EDUCATION IN THE INTERNATIONAL DECADE OF INDIGENOUS PEOPLES:

## BRINGING EDUCATION BACK INTO THE MAINSTREAM OF INDIGENOUS PEOPLES' LIVES

By Raymundo Rovillos

*They wanted us to go to school*

*And to turn the pages of books...*

*Why learn the language of books*

*When the forest speaks to you?*

*One cannot eat books,*

*And pens and pencils are poor*

*weapons*

*To kill the deer of the mountains*

*And the grunting boar...*[1]

This poem aptly illustrates one of the issues raised by Indigenous Peoples against the system of education that was imposed on them by colonial and neo-colonial powers. It is a biting indictment of an educational system that is perceived as unsuitable to their needs.

Indeed, Indigenous Peoples in many parts of the world identify education as a crucial factor in the historical process of their marginalization. The process started at the onset of western colonization and was carried over by nation-states after decolonization.

### A Handmaiden of Assimilation

In their attempt to consolidate colonial power, and later, nation-states, the ruling elite imposed a policy of assimilation — nay westernization. This policy was implemented by missionaries and schools that they set up in Indigenous communities. This resulted in the virtual obliteration of most of the Indigenous Peoples' way of life — their cultural practices, traditions, arts, languages.[2] Some elements of their culture, those that were deemed acceptable to the "moral" (i.e., western, Christian and patriarchal) standards of the colonizers and ruling elite, were integrated into the dominant national culture.

But because national cultures are often defined by the westernized elite, Indigenous Peoples' cultures are considered the "other" culture: quaint and backward. In the name of nation-building, national culture was homogenized, and ethnic identities were eradicated.

The responses of Indigenous Peoples to assimilation were varied. Some of them, especially the educated elite, gave in to the assimilationist project. For

example, in the case of the Igorots in the Cordillera, Northern Philippines:

The American educational system was imposed so successfully that the people's minds were conquered so thoroughly they ceased to call it their own, in truth and honesty. It led to the loss of their cultural identity, so much so that many Igorots have become ashamed of calling themselves by their tribal names.[3]

Yet, the cultural identity of Indigenous Peoples was never totally erased. Like the "unpacified" masses of Igorots, the Yaguas, one of the ethnic groups in the Peruvian lowlands, held on to their indigenous way of life. As Jean Pierrre Chaumeil (1984) wrote:

> The permanence and extraordinary vitality of the system of indigenous values today shows clearly on the ideological plane the feeble impact of the numerous attempts at evangelization at Yagua.[4]

## Persistent Inequalities

From the post-colonial period to the present, disparities in education persist. For example, the UNDP reports that in 1997, Indigenous children in Bolivia and Mexico received on average three years less education than non-Indigenous children. In Guatemala the majority of Indigenous People have no formal education — only 40% are literate.[5] In Hawaii, Indigenous Peoples have one of the lowest, if not the lowest, literacy rates, the worst health statistics, the highest amount of suicides, convicted felons, unwed mothers, and welfare recipients.[6]

Because of these conditions Indigenous Peoples perceive western-imposed educational systems as failures. They are required to get an education so they can be coequals with the non-Indigenous people. Yet in schools, they learn this is not so. They are taught to forget if not condemn their "pagan" and "barbarian" past. Their own histories of resistance are not highlighted; and their viable indigenous learning systems, ignored. Even so-called alternative education programmes have failed because they are not based on concrete conditions and aspirations of Indigenous Peoples.

## Response

The UN declaration of 1994-2004 as an International Decade of Indigenous Peoples was an auspicious move, as it triggered discussions and proposed resolutions on the various issues affecting Indigenous Peoples. Among others, it recognized the role of education in the marginalization of Indigenous Peoples, and identified concrete activities to correct past as well as present errors.

On February 29, 1996, the General Assembly of the United Nations adopted a resolution which called on member states to:

*Being in community is a fundamental aspect of education for Indigenous Peoples - © WCC photo*

*Sharon Helen Venne, Cree Nation, citizen of the Blood Tribe through marriage*

> Adopt measures, in cooperation with Indigenous People, to increase knowledge, starting at the elementary-school level and in accordance with the age and development of schoolchildren, concerning the history, traditions, culture and rights of Indigenous People, with special emphasis on the education of teachers at all levels, and adopt measures to restore indigenous place names.[7]

The assembly also encouraged Indigenous Peoples' organizations to:

> Establish and support indigenous schools and university-level institutions and collaborate with the relevant United Nations agencies; participate in the revision of school texts and the contents of programmes of study in order to eliminate discriminatory content and promote the development of indigenous cultures and, where appropriate, in indigenous languages and scripts, develop indigenous curricula for schools and research institutions.[8]

Perhaps one major achievement of the International Decade of Indigenous Peoples is the preparation and finalization of the draft Declaration on the Rights of Indigenous Peoples by the UN Working Group on Indigenous Populations, a subgroup of the UN Human Rights Commission. The draft Declaration emphasizes, among other things, the right of Indigenous Peoples to an education that respects and revitalizes their cultural traditions and customs.[9] It also recognizes the right of Indigenous children "to all levels and forms of education of the State, including the right to establish and control their educational systems and institutions, providing education in their own languages, in a manner appropriate to their cultural methods of teaching and learning.[10]

The UN Declaration bolstered earlier international agreements recognizing the rights of Indigenous Peoples, like the ILO Convention No. 169 adopted in June 1989. Articles 26 to 31 of the Convention provide that these peoples should have an opportunity to acquire education at all levels, at least on equal footing with the rest of the national community. These educational programmes and services should be adapted to address their special needs and should incorporate their histories, their knowledge and technologies, their value systems and their aspirations.[11]

It must be emphasized that these activities at the international level were made possible by pressures from Indigenous Peoples' organizations. It must also be recognized that even before the declaration of the International Decade, there had been efforts at the grassroots level along the line of alternative indigenous education. What the Decade has done was to institutionalize and "mainstream" these initiatives at the community level up to national and international levels.

What follows is an attempt to identify the main characteristics of an alternative education as gleaned from the initiatives of Indigenous Peoples themselves.

## Contours of an Indigenous Education

Long before western education was introduced among Indigenous Peoples, there already existed viable indigenous learning systems. Through these systems, children were taught livelihood and defense skills, the norms and mores of society, as well as their history and culture (e.g. myths, songs, dances, legends, etc.). Thus, education was in the mainstream of Indigenous Peoples' day-to-day life. Education was relevant because it served the needs of Indigenous communities to survive, to be safe from enemy attacks, and to be in harmony with each other and with nature. Most of all, education mirrored and affirmed the distinct cultural identity of Indigenous Peoples.

Today, Indigenous Peoples want to revitalize these basic elements of their learning systems, while they learn new ideas and skills to survive in their rapidly changing environment.

## Reclaiming Ethnic Identities

Realizing that their present educational systems continue to threaten the survival of indigenous culture and do not respond to the needs of Indigenous children, Indigenous Peoples both from the North and the South have undertaken local initiatives to reaffirm their identities through education.

In Hawaii, a group of young and innovative native educators have created the Kukulu Kuhana, a pilot project on the so-called "preferred education". This

is an intensive cultural immersion project. It aims "to establish permanent educational settings throughout the Hawaiian islands where Indigenous People can learn how to function effectively in Hawaii today by gaining the ability to practice a traditional Hawaiian lifestyle, as well as skills necessary to become positive contributors to society..."[12] Through a holistic approach, participants are daily exposed to Hawaiian language, functional Hawaiian arts, Hawaiian physical sciences, Hawaiian social studies, verbal and artistic expression, life skills, and health and physical education.[13]

## Learning New Skills and Ideas

Current efforts in indigenous education are not inspired by sheer nativism. Recognizing that culture is not static but dynamic, Indigenous Peoples also want to learn "modern" sciences, but in the context of their own culture. This goal is clearly articulated by the Arhuacos of the Sierra Nevada de Santa Marta in Colombia, the traditional territory of Arhuaca, Kogi and Malayo Indigenous communities:

> "We the Arhuacos need to be educated and qualified, but we believe that this should be done in accordance with our beliefs and values. We want a bilingual education in Spanish and IKA* and would like the school to assist in teaching us about collaboration and mutual aid. That is, how to live out the egoism of one brother towards another, as our tradition dictates in accordance with our laws handed down by our father Serankua. We wish our children to learn the history of Colombia and the rest of the world, but they should also know our own history, which we possess from the early days of our creation... We also want our children to learn mathematics and all the branches of science that we need to know today, but always based on our own values and needs..."[14]

This statement reflects the desire of Indigenous Peoples to design an alternative indigenous education in their own terms and according to their own pace.

## Speaking their own Language

Another theme that emerges from the practice of (alternative) indigenous education is the demand of Indigenous Peoples for the right to speak their own language, along with the lingua franca (bilingualism).

In Mexico, bilingual and bicultural programmes have been launched at the primary-school level. However, programmes can also be solely in Spanish, if the communities so decide. In addition, textbooks for Indigenous children have been written in various indigenous languages.[15]

In Guatemala, the Agreement on Identity and Rights of Indigenous Peoples between the Government of Guatemala and the Unidad Revolucionaria Nacional Guatemalteca (URNG), signed in Mexico City on March 31, 1995, states that the government should:

> "expand and promote intercultural bilingual education and place emphasis on the study and knowledge of indigenous languages at all educational levels,"[16] and "recruit and train indigenous bilingual teachers and technical and administrative officials..."[17]

In Malaysia, the right to speak the mother tongue is still to be fought for. Indigenous Peoples and advocates accuse the national government of taking a regressive step when it signed into law the 1996 Education Act. Under this law, the right to learn the mother tongue or indigenous language "merely exists at the behest of the minister."[18] Indigenous Peoples and advocates in Malaysia lament that this is a far cry from the 1957 Education Ordinance in which "one could say mother tongue education was a RIGHT of Malays in this country".[19] They therefore call on the Malaysian government to amend the Education Act of 1996 to reflect the National Education Policy as originally stated in the Education Ordinance 1957 ensuring the use, teaching and development of the mother tongue of Malaysian ethnic communities.[20]

*Nancy Kireu, Maasai,*

*Joseph Kilangin, Irian Jaya,*

*Ragnhild Nystad, Sami,*

*Line Skum, Sami,*

*Roberto Muj, Maya*

The Indigenous Peoples' clamor to speak their own language is central to their assertion of their distinct identity. After all, "language is the soul of the indigenous people(s). It is linked to our cultural environment where the world of meanings is stored."[21]

Furthermore, the struggle to speak the mother tongue is at once political. It cannot be divorced from the struggle for self-determination and ancestral land and domain. For if the material bases of culture (i.e., land, people and resources) are gone, how else will language and all its artistic expressions flourish?

*Hombers, San*
*Krisjan, San*
*ohannes, San*

*Matriarchs of the Dineh Nation*

## Taking Charge

Indigenous Peoples want to ensure that their children are not alienated from their cultural identity and indifferent to their struggles. Thus, they demand more direct involvement in the structure, process and content of education. The following demands resonate in various statements, manifestoes, agreements and laws by and for Indigenous Peoples:

- "Teachers should be chosen by the communities;"[22]
- "Give communities and families, which are a source of education, an active role in determining curricula and the school calendar and the authority to recommend the appointment or removal of teachers in order better to serve the educational and cultural interests of communities;"[23]
- "The administrators would have to have very special personalities, to be united with the Indians, and as apprentices and masters rally together for their defense and there would have to be a permanent school which would also be, for us, a university for all that the Indians have to teach."[24]

The clamor for more direct participation in all levels and aspects of the educational system are valid. But there are limits to educational change. Substantive and meaningful participation in the educational system requires more fundamental changes in the political system of nation-states. Certainly the demands enumerated above cannot possibly happen in highly centralized, authoritarian regimes. This is unfortunate, but this also validates what Indigenous Peoples have been saying time and again: that a truly liberating and empowering indigenous education can only happen in the context of a self-determining and democratic society.

*Prof. Raymundo D. Rovillos is a volunteer research coordinator of Tebtebba Foundation, Inc., Philippines*

Notes

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# Two major headaches for Indigenous Peoples

By Engr. Catalino L. Corpuz Jr.

## The fifth year of the Decade of the World's Indigenous Peoples

On August 9 - 10, 1999, some 300 Indigenous people from different parts of the world gathered at the United Nations (UN) headquarters in New York to commemorate the International Day of the World's Indigenous Peoples. This is the fifth year that the NGO Committee on the Decade of the World's Indigenous Peoples, in cooperation with the United Nations High Commissioner for Human Rights (UNHCHR), International Labour Office (ILO) and United Nations Development Programme (UNDP), have held this activity with the increasing participation of Indigenous Peoples themselves.

This year's theme, "Indigenous Peoples and their Relationship to Land" is very timely. For the Indigenous Peoples' movement the basic issue is the gross violation of their right to own and control their territories and resources. Transnational corporations involved in the mining and dam industries are among those guilty of such violations, in most cases in collusion with national governments. The Indigenous Peoples' movement is growing stronger; the event provided a welcome opportunity for them to air their issues and problems.

## The Global Threat of Mining

Advances in technology in recent years have benefited the mining industry. It has lessened the cost of mining from the exploration to the production phase. Sophisticated equipment has made it possible to pinpoint accurately the location of mineral deposits, efficiently analyze the quality of these minerals and determine the quantity of extractable ore reserves within a site. Mining companies are now able to pinpoint, not only the areas that are rich in lode deposits of gold, but also the areas in which there is a substantial occurrence of epithermal gold. They are able to mine and process these mineral ores more economically to gain superprofits.

Tele-mining is one such advance in technology. This allows the entire cycle of mining to be performed by remote operation. It was developed by INCO, the biggest nickel mining company in the world, who claimed it would make mining "safer", more productive and more economical. Based on INCO's model, using tele-mining technology, a conventional mine with a 20-year life and producing US$ 1.2 billion in value would, with a life of 13 years, now produce a total value of US$ 2.4 billion, even with low-grade ore.

The application of bio-leaching in gold, copper and uranium mining is another technological advance. Newmont Mining Corporation, the second leading gold producer in the United States, developed this technology and was able to pull down the production cost of gold into the range of $ 130 - 190/oz. Even if the worldwide gold price goes down to $ 210/oz, Newmont has maintained its profitability and its leading role in the gold mining industry.

Technical advances in the past few years have also made it possible for transnational mining corporations to open new frontiers in mining by moving into areas too difficult to explore before. As a consequence a significant number of new mines have opened on

*Mining in Peru - © Salgado Jr.*

Indigenous territories since 1980 – within established developed mining nations (USA, Australia and Canada) in former or current colonies (Philippines, Indonesia, Brazil, Burma) and in states newly recruited to the mining fraternity (Papua New Guinea, Guyana, West Papua).

Southeast Asia and countries in the Pacific Rim of Fire became the new gold rush areas because new exploration techniques made it possible to search for minerals in areas hardly accessible before but nevertheless highly viable economically.

While transnational mining companies such as Freeport Mc Moran and Rio Tinto Zinc wreak havoc on Indigenous Peoples' lands, even junior Canadian mining companies have been aggressively exploring new mining areas. Between 100,000 to 500,000 Indigenous People have been directly and adversely affected or had their territorial/land claims compromised by Canadian juniors alone in the past decade.

When new mining areas are discovered political barriers must be removed so that transnational mining corporations can gain easy access to large areas of mineral lands and be assured of continuity in their operations.

In the past, the nationalization of the mining industry in Third-World countries proved to be a big barrier to imperialist exploitation. In the 1960's, the success of national liberation movements in these countries limited the mineral areas which imperialist countries could access and exploit. Sovereign states nationalized their mining industries as part of controlling their strategic industries.

To remove political barriers, that is, state control of the mining industry and Indigenous Peoples' ancestral land rights, mining regulations needed to allow easier access by transnational mining corporations to mineral lands and facilitate the take-over of state-owned mining companies. Hence the need to

enact new mining codes.

As a result of active promotion of deregulation policies, privatization and liberalization by major mining companies through the 'chambers of mines' of their respective countries, mining codes in about 70 Southern countries have changed. For instance, a strong mining industry lobby in the Philippines leading up to the enactment of the 1995 Mining Act guaranteed legislation ensuring the profitability of its operations. The industry obtained numerous tax benefits, such as tax exemptions, tax holidays and free importation of capital goods. Under the new law, it is also allowed liberal accounting procedures.

However these new frontiers for mining are usually in remote areas inhabited by Indigenous communities. While mining codes are changed, access by transnational mining corporations to those territories remains difficult. This becomes more so as Indigenous Peoples assert their ancestral land rights and practice small-scale mining. So mining companies had to pressure national governments for further concessions in the form of related laws governing the ancestral lands of Indigenous Peoples.

Thus the recolonization of sovereign Indigenous states is taking place, with the transnational corporations playing the lead roles. This is facilitated by the process of globalization under the direction of the World Bank (WB), the International Monetary Fund (IMF) and now the World Trade Organization (WTO). The main thrust of these institutions is to remove all barriers to the free entry of corporations to exploit primary resources, to free trade and entry of investments.

Transnational mining companies have consolidated, such as re-concentrating mine capital in the hands of a few giant mining corporations in order to allow access to and acquisition of large tracts of mineral lands. Rio Tinto and Anglo-American, for instance, now control up to 25% of the world's most important hard-rock mineral resources.

In the past, a political risk insurance system was needed to secure investments, especially in mining. If the moves to liberalize investments further succeed, such as the attempts to ram through an investment treaty in WTO, this will no longer be necessary.

"New resource wars" are being waged on Indigenous frontiers. It has been calculated, based on the industry's own projected capital expenditure until AD 2010, that 90% of all the world's "new gold", around 80% of its nickel, more than 60% of its copper and around half of its coal, will all be derived from Indigenous Peoples' lands.

## Mining and Dams

There are currently 1,600 dams under construction in 42 countries worldwide. According to the World Bank, the construction of 300 large dams each year will mean the displacement of more than four million Indigenous People from their territories. The World Commission on Dams is leading international activities to highlight the issue of dams and its impact on Indigenous Peoples.

**There are currently 1,600 dams under construction in 42 countries worldwide. According to the World Bank, the construction of 300 large dams each year will mean the displacement of more than four million Indigenous People from their territories.**

In India, where more than 600 out of a planned 1,600 dams are currently under construction, 40% of the people displaced are Adivasis, or Indigenous People. Almost all the larger dam schemes built and proposed in the Philippines are on the land of the country's 6.5 million Indigenous People. The majority of the 58,000 people evicted to make way for Vietnam's dam, Hoa Binh, come from ethnic minority groups, as are most of the 112,000 who will be displaced by the even bigger Ta Bu dam planned further downstream.

These dams are important to the mining industry, which consumes a lot of power. Aluminum production is particularly energy-intensive. The world aluminum industry uses an estimated 290 billion

*Helena Begay, Dineh Nation*

kilowatt-hours of electricity each year. This is more than enough to provide power for the entire African continent. Worldwide, the mining industry is estimated to consume 5 to 10 percent of the world's energy.

Therefore, to attract investment from the mining industry, national governments include the construction of dams providing cheap energy for mining companies in their infra-structure development plans.

In Irian Jaya, for example, the Indonesian government created nine "Growth Centers" one of which is the Mamberano Integrated Area Development (MIAD). In which the steel, gold, copper, coal, uranium, nickel and petroleum industries will be active. MIAD is to be preceded by dam development to supply its energy needs. Around 420,035 of Irian Jaya's total population of 1,892,200 will be affected, mostly people from the Kawera, Baudy and Dany, Pihar, Monau, Harau, Siwaya and other tribes who live around the area.

*Eugenio Poma, Aymara*

In the Philippines, the 435 MW San Roque MultiPurpose Dam is a flagship project under the government's medium-term development programme. It is being constructed to provide the anticipated additional needs for power of transnational mining companies such as Newmont Gold Mining Co. in the Cordillera region. This will inundate a large area of Indigenous Peoples' lands and destroy the seat of the Ibaloi culture.

While hydropower energy supplies 20% of global power needs, a substantial proportion is being used by the mines, specially in countries that are highly dependent on such energy. In Namibia, which depends solely on hydropower, the1994 - 1995 total country demand was for 1,639 kWh of energy. A substantial share, 38.5% was used by the mines.

Brazil, which gets 90% of its energy needs from hydropower, is taming the Tucurui river with the construction of a dam to provide fuel for the Grande Carajas mining programme and other industrial projects. The dam has an installed capacity of 4,200 MW, enough to fuel energy-hungry aluminum plants which add value to domestically mined bauxite.

More Indigenous Peoples are expected to be displaced as dams on major river basins throughout the world are being planned: the Mekong Delta in Indo-China, the Narmada project in India, the Three Gorges Dam in the Peoples Republic of China and the Tucurui Dam Project on the Amazon river.

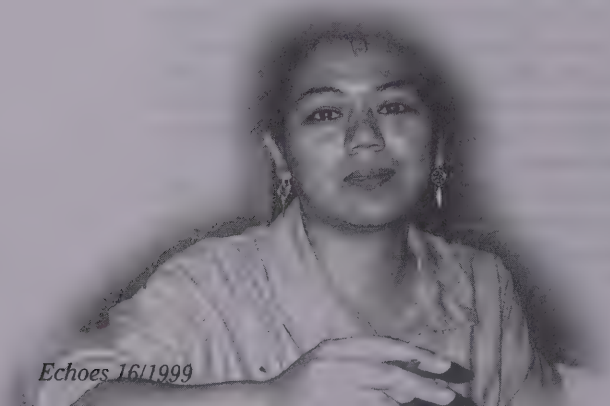
## The Challenge to Indigenous Peoples

Indigenous Peoples throughout the world are becoming apprehensive what it might take for the United Nations to finally adopt the Declaration on the Rights of Indigenous People. Their apprehension is based on the fact that, within the process of globalization, transnational corporations have become more aggressive in entering Indigenous Peoples' lands. Laws and policies on the national and international level are already biased in their favour. These are not just. The development agenda of most governments is actually "development aggression" as far as Indigenous Peoples are concerned.

Indigenous Peoples are fiercely defending their territories. At the same time, they are bringing their urgent concerns and issues to international bodies. During the fifth year of the commemoration of the International Day of Indigenous Peoples, their representatives adopted three important resolutions:

- that land rights be made a regular agenda of the UN Working Group on Indigenous Populations,
- that the Draft Declaration of the Rights of Indigenous Peoples be adopted even before the Indigenous Decade ends in 2004,
- and that sessions of the UN Working Group be increased to last two weeks to give more time for all Indigenous Peoples to bring out their issues and concerns.

The worldwide trend to promote Codes of Conduct is also being regarded more critically by Indigenous Peoples. There are now 270 proposed voluntary codes of conduct for transnational corporations. For Indigenous Peoples, such codes should not be used as substitutes for national legislation to protect their rights. The Draft Declaration on the Rights of Indigenous Peoples should be the main framework underpinning codes of conduct guiding all governments and transnational corporations in dealing with Indigenous Peoples. For some Indigenous Peoples, the exercise of creating codes of conduct is diver-



*Beverly Longid, Kankanaey-Igorot (Philippines)*

sionary and a waste of time.

The focus of Indigenous People's energies at the international level, should be in pushing for the adoption of the Draft Declaration of the Rights of Indigenous Peoples. On the national level, it should be on getting governments genuinely to promote and protect the rights of Indigenous Peoples rather than giving transnational corporations, such as mining companies, more rights over the stewards and custodians of the land and its resources.

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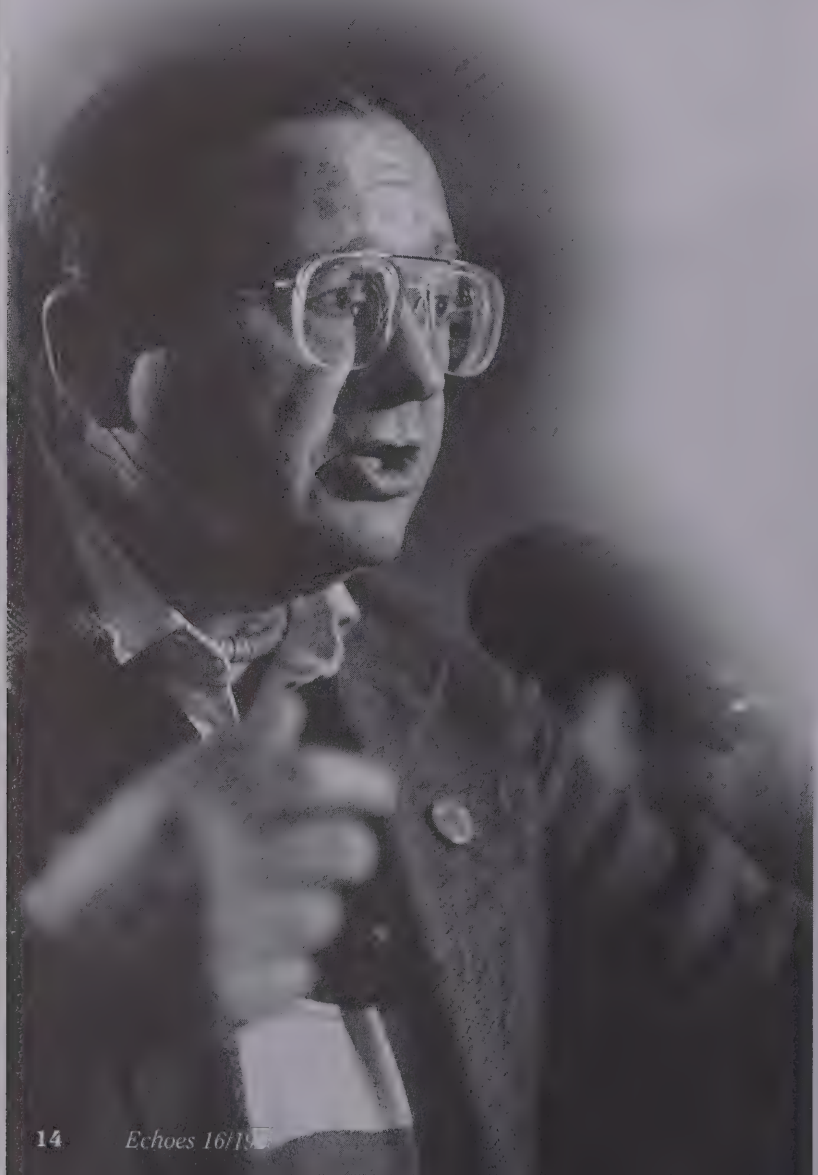
*Norman Benally & Roberto, Dineh Nation.*

# Harare and Indigenous Peoples

## By Tink Tinker



*Dr. George Tinker, Osage / Cherokee*
*© Peter Williams / WCC*

"Why Are We Still Waiting," asked an Indigenous Peoples' Caucus in an "appeal" to the World Council of Churches' Eighth Assembly in Harare, Zimbabwe, in December 1998. In a compelling document, the more than three dozen Indigenous delegates, advisors and "Padare" participants making up the pre-assembly Caucus named the character of their common struggles, concerns, needs and hopes. "We are still waiting," they said, "for true partnership, for full recognition of our rights."

Indigenous Peoples, especially those aboriginal nations of lands currently ruled by colonial settler states or states that have unilaterally expanded their territories to include other peoples and their lands, have much in common, both culturally and politically.[1] Most often, Indigenous Peoples are politically in tension with the states that claim hegemony over them and their lands. Their cultures and languages are continually threatened by the imposition of an artificial sense of unity and uniformity. Their access to economic well-being is usually related to their willingness to comply with the cultural and economic norms of the state in control. While state hegemony can be either overt or much more subtly veiled, it is always decisive and firm.

"National" (that is state-based) denominational structures all too often participate in the cultural domination of the state by expecting compliance by Indigenous member congregations with culturally based policies and procedures established as normative within the denomination. Funding and participation in decision-making quite often depends precisely, if implicitly, on such matters of compliance by Indigenous congregations, ministries, and leadership. Indigenous concerns are a lingering aspect of colonialism to which little attention has been paid internationally.

Besides the commonness of their colonial histo-

ries, Indigenous Peoples share cultural similarities that make for remarkably similar theological concerns. Moreover, these theological similarities again put Indigenous Peoples typically at odds with the theological currents dominant in their denominations and regions. The traditional cultures of Indigenous Peoples are most often rooted in some deep spiritual connection to the lands that form their traditional territories, making for a theology rooted in spatiality much more than in the colonial concern for temporality. Thus, for instance, the "kingdom of God" will more naturally be interpreted as a creation metaphor, signifying the place or space that God "rules," rather than in terms of the typical European and Amer-European understanding of the metaphor as eschatological and temporal. Likewise, the cultural concern for a community value system will characterize Indigenous theologies in contrast to the colonizer cultures that lend themselves to individualistic theological interpretations. The Cartesian notion of the self, so central in European and Amer-European philosophies and theologies must give way in Indigenous communities to a theological concern for the community. In Indigenous theologies, the self only finds meaning within the context of the community.

**The traditional cultures of Indigenous Peoples are most often rooted in some deep spiritual connection to the lands that form their traditional territories, making for a theology rooted in spatiality much more than in the colonial concern for temporality.**

## Global concerns

The principal need of Indigenous Peoples within the WCC has to do with pressing the global concerns of Indigenous Peoples.[2] The Indigenous Caucus at Harare agreed that this global agenda was also our agenda, that our struggle within our denominations is always linked to this broader struggle for cultural and political survival. We are poised to press this agenda within the WCC by struggling to empower Indigenous voices over against denominational, "national" (i.e., state), and regional interests. Moreover, we are so bold as to think that our theologies have something significant to contribute to theological discourse in our denominations, our regions, and to the whole of the WCC community of communions.

The lingering question is whether these communions are willing and able to listen to what Indigenous Peoples have to say. For too long, Indigenous Peoples have been merely the consumers of the missionary theologizing of their denominations. We have been held captive to the particular interests of the dominant voices that have imposed themselves on our cultural development. Regional interests, state cultures and denominational theologies have combined as a particularly pervasive and invasive overlay on our own theological development. It is past time for Indigenous liberation from these structures of oppression and imposition.

Seven years earlier, the WCC Assembly was hosted by Australian churches with a strong Aboriginal presence. At the Seventh Assembly in Canberra, Indigenous issues were very prominent and seemed to have a very high priority among the WCC member churches. Canberra spoke about "Moving Beyond Words"[3] in dealing with Indigenous issues, but Canberra was another time and another place. By Harare, Indigenous Peoples were a little nervous that their concerns had faded in the minds of the churches. The "Appeal" was an attempt to highlight Indigenous struggles once again and to recall the promises made at Canberra.

## Major promises have failed

Yet as the Eighth Assembly began, it became apparent that one of the major promises of Canberra was going to fail miserably. Ten to fifteen percent Indigenous membership in the WCC's Central Committee had been the goal. Yet the first report from the Nominations Committee made it clear that there would be precious few Indigenous Folk to press the issues raised so clearly at Canberra. Meeting over

*Glenna Begay, Dineh Nation*

*The plenary hall of the assembly, with backdrops designed by Zimbabwean artist Chaz Maviyane-Davies*

early breakfasts, furtive lunches or suppers in the packed dining halls of the University of Zimbabwe, the Indigenous Caucus tried to adopt the political strategies that might turn the matter around. Working extra hours in days that were already too long, they began to lobby their regional and denominational delegations, producing minimal results against overwhelming odds.

Given our communitarian cultural perspective, we were, as always, unprepared for the individualist investment in ego associated with Central Committee membership. Just as significantly, we were naively unprepared for the reality that Central Committee membership is used to protect institutional prerogatives and political power within the Council.

One of the difficult nuts to crack, as it turned out, was the North American regional delegation, a situation compounded by another set of politics within the World Council. The region had already given up one of its Central Committee slots to the Orthodox in a Council-wide move to reduce their dissatisfaction with power balances. The North American discussion may present an interesting case study of WCC political processes. So this essay is offered as illustrative. While it is written from an unashamedly Indigenous perspective, it is hoped that it can promote creative dialogue among all of us.

The North American churches had arrived with seven American Indian delegates, four of whom participated in the Indigenous Peoples Caucus and formed a trust relationship and a political bond with the Caucus. It was only natural, then, for the Caucus to promote one of these four for election to the Central Committee as a part of its overall strategy.

The Caucus focussed on the person they felt was most likely to be eligible as well as being someone they could trust to pursue the larger Indigenous agenda with vigour and wisdom. Their candidate fit two criteria that were in short supply in the first, provisional, list of candidates brought forward by the Nominating Committee. She was both female and a lay person. Moreover, she was an American Indian deeply rooted in her own community, its culture and its traditions, while being, at the same time, worldwise with regard to politics in the WCC community. She seemed a rather ideal choice..

## Difficulties arise

Denominational politics, however, was not yet done with the Indigenous Caucus. The first difficulty was a matter of procedure. Nomination required naming the candidate whom the nominee was to replace, and this became an unexpected problem. After mulling over the options, members of the Indigenous Caucus decided to name her as a replacement for an ordained, male candidate of her own denomination. More women and non-clergy members were needed in the Central Committee makeup. Just as importantly, the two worked on the same staff in a national church office. It seemed unlikely that such a large denomination would approve two people from the same staff.

As a rule, marginalized communities, in the heat of their struggle for liberation, recognition, survival and/or equality, are able to pay little attention to the institutional needs of those bodies that have the power either to help them advance or continue to disempower them. The struggle for liberation is rooted in pain that runs deep. There is little energy among the colonized for sympathizing with the needs of the colonizer. For this reason, the Indigenous Caucus was completely unprepared for the virulent reaction to what the denomination's delegation seems to have perceived as a threat to its own institutional prerogatives and exercise of power.

The denomination in question is, without a doubt, one of North America's most broad-minded, with an illustrious track record on issues of social justice and human rights. Yet, even cutting edge-institutions have their blind spots. After so many centuries of conquest, the most politically liberal institutions in colonizer communities can lapse into postures of paternalism and hierarchical exercises of power. They sometimes act like middle-aged parents who have forgotten that their children have already grown into adulthood. And I say this without admitting any veracity in the colonial illusion that the colonized ever were or are children.

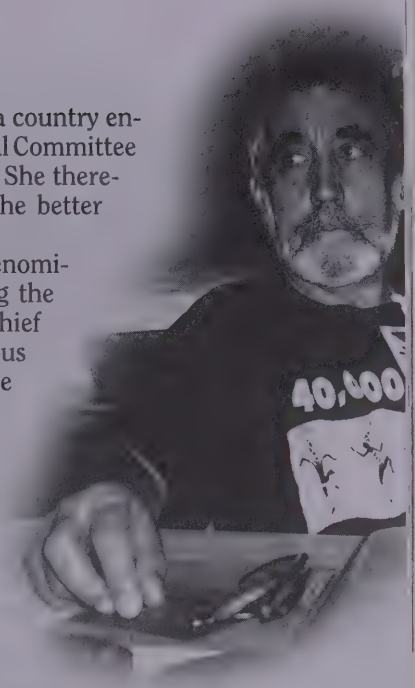
## A choice of loyalties

Quite suddenly, well-intentioned and good-hearted people could focus only on the well-being of the denomination and swung into full defense of its institutional prerogatives which, it seemed, were suddenly more important than any commitment to a broader solidarity within the WCC or to the struggle for justice in a global context. Indigenous members of the denomination's delegation were being forced to choose between denominational loyalty and loyalty to their ethno-cultural communities of reference. Yet, no one would come right out and ask, "Are you Indian or Methodist?" Liberal sensitivities run too deep for racism to become quite so bold these days. Yet the implicit colonial assumption is still one that all people, regardless of ethnicity, will rise to support the institutions established on some sort of presumed a-cultural structure of normativity.

It no longer mattered that the North American Indigenous candidate was nominated against her immediate wishes or that the nomination came with the unanimous consent of the Indigenous Caucus. She had finally consented out of a sense of obligation to the strategies planned. The fact that she worked in the same office and under the leadership of the person her nomination seemed most likely to replace was no more than a procedural matter in the minds of the Caucus in its pursuit of justice for Indigenous Peoples. The other possible choices had been two American Indian men, one from this same denomination and the other from Canada, but the latter was ordained and came from a country entitled to only two places on the Central Committee – a much more difficult possibility.[4] She therefore seemed to the Caucus to be the better choice.

*Suikhar Chin, Liton Bom*

When it became clear that the denomination had no intention of allowing the withdrawal of the candidacy of its chief ecumenical officer the Indigenous Caucus shifted its strategy. Since three of the four potential Indigenous candidates for Central Committee came with this one denomination, another of their named candidates was singled for substitution by an Indigenous candidate. Since it was also clear that the denomination would not allow two of its four Central Committee seats to go to national staff serving in the same office, support shifted to a lay male Indigenous candidate from the same denomination, again, with full, consensual support from the Indigenous Caucus. And it should be noted that the nomination of a new candidate was correct procedurally and represented the Caucus' attempt to participate in politically appropriate ways. Our goal was to hold the WCC accountable to its earlier promises and to serve Indigenous communities well by gaining a substantial voice on the WCC governing body. As much as possible, for obvious political reasons, we tried to take into account the denomination's self-perception of institutional needs, although we refused to concede a greater importance to its needs than our own.




*Peter Smith, Aborigine*

## Institutional resistance

Nevertheless, our efforts to achieve some political parity in the WCC continued to encounter institutional resistance from the denomination. When one of the delegation leaders pressed us and asked why we were "picking on" his denomination, our reply was, "Bishop, you came to the Assembly with the best North American Indigenous delegates." For them, it had become a "no-win" situation. Having taken care to balance their delegation in terms of gender and ethnicity, they found themselves vulnerable to other political currents in the Assembly. They had done well; now they were being pressed to do more.

In the end, the denomination capitulated. They did so with considerable panache, as we have come to expect from them. In that regard they, and the North American region, did better than the European delegation, where institutional/denominational needs were deemed more pressing than demographic ones. Not only did Europe fail to elect an Indigenous (Sami) candidate, but they were also far off the mark in terms of gender balance. In spite of the strong vocal presence of Samis in the European delegation, they were unable to dislodge the privi-

*Dineh Nation and Hopi People gathered on the occasion of the visit of UN Special Rapporteur (Mr. Amor) on Religious Intolerance in the USA*

leging of European men in denominational hierarchical structures.

Latin America helped the Indigenous cause by electing two Indigenous candidates among their slate of only six as well they should, given Latin American demographics. They also managed to maintain gender balance, with three males and three females. But even here, there was considerable tension and potential political repercussions for the Indigenous women elected. One of these was added to the slate of candidates instead of her own pastor, creating tensions that they will have to sort out between them. Asia and the Pacific also elected Indigenous candidates, but Asia was, like Europe, far off the mark on gender balance.

## Gender balance

While there were eleven female and eleven males on the North American slate, the Europeans listed fourteen men and only eleven women. Asia and Africa likewise named more men than women to the CC. Given the gender imbalance implicit in Orthodox praxis today, the short-comings in these regions contributed to a final result that was virtually no advance over Canberra. Less than forty percent of the new Central Committee is female. And on the final day of the assembly only two women elected among the eight WCC presidents – even worse than Canberra. Needless to say, Indigenous Peoples have yet to crack the presidential barrier.

Political negotiations in the WCC are subject to a variety of institutional, regional, and demographic pressures and needs. The political fortunes of individuals with aspirations can wax and wane in a matter of hours as delegations and nominating committees to juggle conflicting interests. We need a woman here, a lay person there, and an Indigenous person over there, but there is always room for a few ordained men to be in charge. The political needs of those who have been regularly and historically marginalized means that our struggles for parity almost necessarily put us in competition with each other. So, for instance, the political strategies of the Indigenous Caucus at the assembly sometimes put us in direct competition with women.

This is not, of course, to concede a necessary connection in the Indigenous/female tension, but merely to recognize how the structures of male power and denominational prerogatives function to create such tension among potential allies. On the contrary, the competition between the aspirations of Indigenous Peoples and women is a curious phenomenon, given that many Indigenous Peoples are inclined to demonstrate a strong sense of gender parity. Our ancient cultures, and thus our theologies, tend to produce social structures that constantly struggle for balance between male and female, men and women. In many of our cultures, even the traditional images of deity express a reciprocal dualism that pairs male and female. Thus maleness is not privileged even in the mythic structures of peoples' consciousness. Indeed, where it exists in Indigenous communities it has more to do with the meddling of missionaries imposing their notions of male privilege on our peoples.

When male privilege and denominational imperatives combine in WCC political manoeuvering,

women and Indigenous Peoples can be put into oppositional antagonism that logically ought not be. As two groups struggling against traditional marginalization, we should be engaged in mutual support. Yet an all-too-natural divide and conquer strategy puts us in competition with one another. Funding structures in the US, for instance, both governmental and private, seem to take particular delight in placing American Indian groups in competition with one another for small pockets of funding. A few places on a Central Committee has done the same to women and Indigenous Peoples as two marginalized groups within the WCC.

There is yet another problem that we have begun to identify here. Indigenous issues necessarily cut across all regions and all denominations. Thus, any Indigenous member of the Central Committee or delegate to an assembly will experience the pull of differing allegiances – regional, denominational and Indigenous. On many issues the latter proves most compelling. So the politics of balancing all these interests has only begun with election to the Central Committee. An Indigenous Caucus will have to meet regularly to determine their overall political strategies in relation to denominational and regional interests.

We can only hope that the WCC, the new Central Committee and the Executive Council are now ready to "move beyond words." It will not come without pain and struggle within the WCC and its member churches. It will test both theology and praxis. Yet it needs to be reiterated that Indigenous People pursue strategies for recognition with much more than self-interest in mind. Indigenous People are clamouring for a hearing with the full conviction that our cultures and the resulting theologies have much to contribute to the family of communions in the WCC. We firmly believe that to "move beyond words" is in the self-interest of the entire WCC. Will our theologies be heard? Will our insights be considered? Or is there only room for denominational orthodoxies, liberal and conservative, in the discourse of the WCC?

## Notes

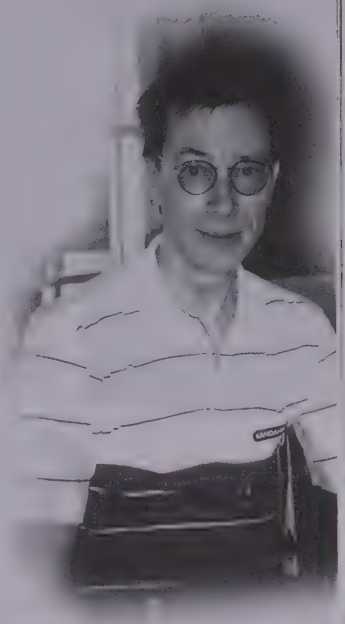
1. "Indigenous Peoples" is a category that includes a wide variety of peoples around the world. For instance, not all Pacific Islanders will agree to the political agenda described above. Holding nominal control over their own political structures in the lands (islands) where they are indigenous, they have less need to resist and confront the modern state and its apparatuses. Such is not the case, however, with the Kanukamaoli in their native Hawaii, or the Maori of Aoteoroa (or what is today called New Zealand). The above agenda also fails to treat Africa, where Indigenous Peoples, at least to a point, may control the modern state. In Africa, we must remember that the nature of the state has already been determined by nineteenth-century colonial realities. Likewise, modern African economies, even where the governing apparatuses are African, are largely dictated by international forces of globalization dictated by the World Bank, the International Monetary Fund, the USA, and other world economic powers. For a UN-sponsored definition of "Indigenous" see José R. Martinez Cobo, Special Rapporteur of the Sub-Commission on Prevention of Discrimination and Protection of Minorities, "Study of the Problem of Discrimination against Indigenous Populations, Volume V: conclusions, Proposals, and Recommendations" (New York: United Nations, 1987), UN Doc. E/CN 4/Sub.2/1986.

*John Vara Prasada Rao, Dalit*

2. The WCC community should already be aware of the UN Working Group on Indigenous Peoples. The WCC has been supportive in many ways of Indigenous delegations to the semi-annual meetings of the Working Group held in Geneva.

3. See the WCC Canberra Assembly Document by this name: "Moving Beyond Words".

4. The only Indigenous delegate with one North American delegation served on the Nominations Committee and was thus ineligible for election. Another delegation also came with an Indigenous member, but she declined candidacy, claiming retirement from public life. The Canadian Indigenous delegate was very appealing to the Indigenous Caucus and brought much ecumenical experience to the assembly. Yet Canada has only two slots on the Central Committee, necessarily representing two different denominations, making the politics of selection even more difficult. Later in the assembly, the Canadian became a candidate for WCC president from North America, but finally lost to one of only two women elected to the presidium. Once again, the struggles of two marginalized groups were pitted against one another.



*Lars Johnson, Sami*

*Tink (George) Tinker was a WCC Indigenous Advisor to the Eighth Assembly. He is associate professor of crosscultural ministries at the Iliff School of Theology, Denver, USA*

# LAND AND SPIRITUALITY IN AFRICA

*In 1996, Indigenous People met during the Conference on World Mission and Evangelism held in Salvador Bahia Brazil. One year later, the World Council of Churches' Indigenous Peoples' Programme (WCC/IPP) in cooperation with the Botswana Christian Council also held a workshop under the theme "Spirituality, Land and the Role of the Churches in the Struggle for the Indigenous Peoples' Rights" in Gabarone. From that meeting came a call to continue building spiritual, cultural and political identities within the churches in the countries where Indigenous Peoples are located. The areas of critical concern identified were land, protection of rights under international law, preservation/promotion of culture, decision making processes, advocacy, spirituality and networking.*

*In February 1998, some Indigenous Peoples participants who had been at the Gabarone workshop and other representatives from Africa, attended a consultation on "Land and Spirituality" in Karasjok, Norway. Here the world-wide Indigenous Peoples community exchanged ways in which their spiritualities and lands were threatened. From this sharing, ideas of cooperation and responsibilities were discussed. The Indigenous meeting and the statement of Karasjok became a strong challenge to convene in Harare to identify the critical issues affecting African Indigenous Peoples in general. Before the WCC's eighth Assembly in Harare, "Land and Spirituality: The African Context" was the theme chosen for the workshop – the same theme used in Karasjok, Norway. It showed the connectedness between the spiritualities of the Indigenous Peoples and the land on which they originated.*

# LAND: BREAKING BONDS AND CEMENTING TIES

**by Edmore Mufema, University of Zimbabwe**

The complex interplay of land both as an economic resource and as a basis of the political superstructure cemented, tied and broke bonds among nations, ethnic groups, religions, genders and classes in the pre-colonial and independent periods.

## Land as a socio-economic resource

The centrality of land to economic development and social welfare is unquestionable. Land has been used from time immemorial to promote economic growth and human development. More than half of the world's population live and earn their living out of tilling the land as farmers. In Africa, even in countries such as Egypt which are more than 90% desert, agriculture is the mainstay of economic activity for the majority of people. Despite the development of large-scale, capital intensive farming, the majority of Africans are small-scale and peasant farmers. The majority of these peasant farmers use family labour – mainly women and children to work on the land and to produce both cash crops and food crops. The use of family labour has tended to strengthen some of the traditional patrilineal systems – African women do not have legal right to ownership of family farms and plots in a communal area. I would submit that African post-colonial states have not done enough to change both the traditional and colonial heritages with regard to land and gender inequality.

The centrality of land to African economic development has been tied to the significance of land resources to cultural and traditional practices. Rituals related to rain-making, thanksgiving and prayer have historically been tied to the land in Africa. Control of land was thus linked to the complex interplay of economic, social and political power. The coming of foreign religions such as Islam and Christianity to Africa further complicated an already complex framework.

## Land as a political tool

Ownership, control, distribution and access to land have historically been used to dominate and em-

*In Africa agriculture is the main economic activity for the majority of people.*

© WCC Photo - Peter Williams

power different nations, races, genders and classes in Africa. Even during the pre-colonial era, land was used to create and destroy empires and nations. The Bantu migrations from the western and central parts of Africa downward, more than a thousand years ago, were in part necessitated by conflict over the control of agricultural, grazing and hunting lands. The same can be said of the Mfecane period in Southern African history in the 19th Century.

We can point out many other examples, but the important point here is that the struggle for control and ownership of land in the pre-colonial period left a political legacy of large and dominant states such as the Buganda Kingdom in Eastern Africa and the Zulu nation in Southern Africa. Alongside these dominant political entities there are numerous small ethnic groups and small states. The relations between these ethnic groups and nations have not always been smooth.

During the colonial period contestation over land increased. The land question became emeshed in the race, colour and ethnic divisions within Africa. European settler economic and political systems were built on the acquisition of African land. European settler colonization in many African countries led to the expropriation of land. There are numerous examples of such struggles over land – the Shire highlands in Malawi, the Kenyan Highlands, the land question in South Africa and Zimbabwe – while the Algerian land struggle against French colonization led to one of the longest and most gruesome wars of independence.

During the colonial era, contention and conflict over land tended to assume more than just racial undercurrents. Religious institutions and the Church acquired vast land holdings and added a complex dimension to the land question. The Church benefited from the colonial inequalities, and the promotion of Christianity went a long way toward the undermining of African traditional cultures and beliefs. I will propose that the colonial domination of land by the settler governments and Christian religious institutions undermined the local economic and cultural traditions which were centred on the ownership, control and production from land. Some African chiefs and ethnic groups which supported the dominant colonial superstructure and those that readily accepted Christianity also benefited from generous land grants during the colonial period while the majority of African peasants were forced into reserves or Bantustans. Thus we may want to evaluate the benefits and costs of the colonial intrusions, westernization and the grafting of Christian civilization onto African soils so that we can build on the strengths and learn from the mistakes of the past.

## Land and the post-colonial crisis in Africa

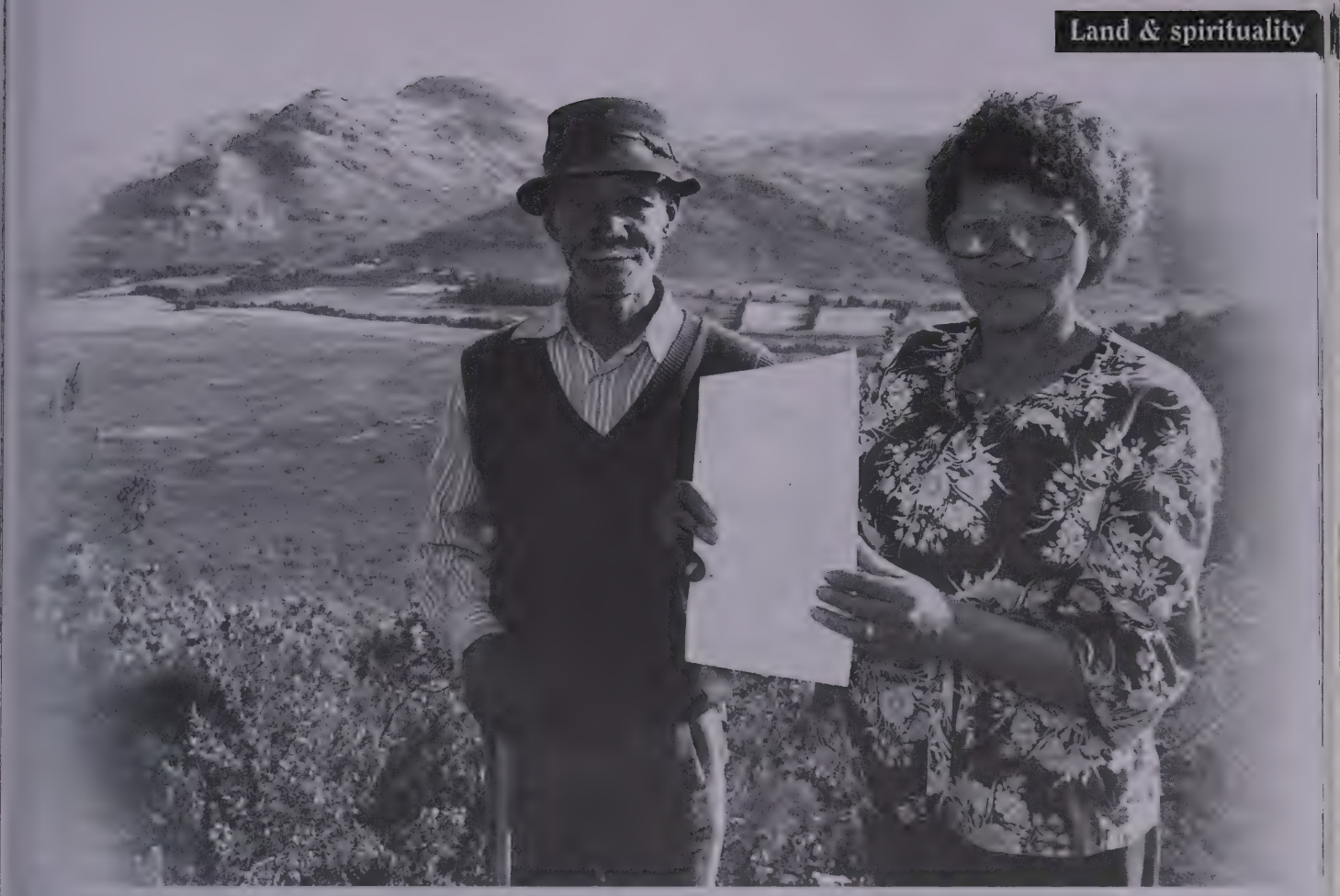
Land was one of the pillars of the liberation movement in Africa. The post-colonial regimes have not adequately addressed the land question. There is a general failure to equitably redistribute land. In this regard, disputes and contestation over the control of land have occurred between and within states.

Inter-state contests over land resources are mainly the result of the failure of colonial boundaries to adequately address and meet the needs and goals of the African people. In Eastern Africa, for instance, the movement of Maasai cattle herders across borders has often created border disputes between Kenya, Tanzania and Uganda, while cementing social and economic ties within one ethnic group living in different countries.

Perhaps the majority of the post-independence land conflicts in Africa have been intra-state struggles. One of the fundamental causes has been the failure of the post-colonial regimes to redress the land inequalities and structural deformations inherited from the colonial periods. Despite the political changes, there has been more continuity than change in the racial and class nature of land ownership, distribution and control in Africa.

Political independence without corresponding economic and social transformation has caused socio-economic and political clashes over land. Population growth and developmental needs have also exacerbated the struggle over land. The genocide in Rwanda and Burundi between the Hutus and the Tutsi can be traced to conflict over the control of political and economic resources, of which land is a central feature. In Sudan, the control of land and economic resources is also tied to the political, religious and ethic conflict between the Northern Arabs, who are mainly Muslim, and the Southern Africans, who are predominantly a Christian people. In many other African countries including Zimbabwe, South Africa and Algeria, failure to redress the colonial land and economic resource maldistribution could potentially wreak havoc, and has indeed caused some confrontation among the different racial and ethnic groups and classes of people.

*Benon Mugarura, Batwa*



*Former residents of the Elandskloof farm in West Cape Province near Citrusdal. These residents are now facing a second forced removal in three decades. Martines Fransman and Alette Ties showing the document which they hope will bring themselves and other 26 families back to Elandskloof farm which they were forced to leave in 1961.*

*© WCC Photo - Peter Williams*

# SPIRITUALITY, LAND AND LAND REFORM IN SOUTH AFRICA

## by Mr Z. Nkosi, South Africa

Land ownership in South Africa is still racially skewed. About 80% of land is still in the hands of the white minority. Africans used to occupy, not own, only 3% of South African land before 1994. Since 1994 an ambitious Land Reform Programme is attempting to address the land question. The reason the Black South Africans continue to suffer is that all three components of this programme continue to have serious limitations. For example, the Land Restitution Component, meant to help the previously evicted communities to reclaim their ancestral land, get an alternative piece of land and/or get compensated, is seen as a disaster. Out of about 25,000 claims, six have been finalized and only about 20 are in the Land Claims Court for further negotiation, settlement or ratification. In land redistribution only about 50,000 people have benefited. The Tenure Security Reform element has had dismal failures because the farm dwellers and other tenants continue to be evicted from the land of their ancestors in big numbers despite the government's attempts to secure the rights of the victims.

### History of Land Acquisition and Spirituality

While land is a birthright of every African Indigenous person, it has a communal dimension whereby all members of the community are expected to share its resources, especially in the rural areas, under some form of traditional authority. Traditional authority from an African point of view is very central and important because, despite the fact that it is a uniting force, the community leader is seen as a steward with divine authority over land.

The colonizers acquired land in an insensitive manner, driven by greed, and the process was intended to vanquish and dehumanize the original owners. This was achieved through military subjugation. The Zulu-Anglo War of 1879 and the Anglo-Boer War of the early 19th Century can be traced back to the struggles for land. A number of massacres of Black South Africans were nothing other than an insensitive, greedy and cruel method for dispossessing Blacks of the land. Land was acquired with total disregard of traditional beliefs and cultures underpining our spirituality as Black Africans. Indigenous

**Indigenous communities were stripped of their dignity, many lost their identity while other communities lost their languages, cultures and spiritualities.**

communities were stripped of their dignity, many lost their identity, languages, cultures and spiritualities. In this sense, land was acquired and used as a political tool.

After acquiring land, the colonizers commercialized it and later inflated its price. That left us with no land we could call our own. We soon found ourselves in exile in our own country. It is painful to note that churches, especially those that own land, were involved in the process which left Africans with nothing except 'ubuntu', a confused culture and a hope that God and their ancestors were still with them in their pain and happiness.

## Belief and the Importance of Land in the African Context

Our belief that land is a gift from God and from our ancestors has not left us. We continue to see ourselves as stewards of God's resources, especially of communally owned land. Even though land ownership has been men's domain, it is interesting that many women, with support from our constitution, beginning to access or acquire land in spite of traditional prejudices.

In many African families the umbilical cord of a new born baby is buried. In other communities when a boy is circumcized, the foreskin and blood is also buried. The sacredness of land in Africa is further linked to the fact that our ancestors are buried in it. Without land, we would not have a home for a dead body. That is why we kneel barefooted next to the grave when we want to communicate anything to our ancestors, showing a lot of respect for the land on which they lie. When death strikes in a family, no one is allowed to till the land. We mourn until that person is buried. After a funeral, in some cultures, we do not touch the soil with a hoe, do not plough or till the land until a ritual of cleansing the family is performed. Some communities like the AmaZulu, do not till the land for a year when a member of a royal family has passed away. The Zulu tribe believes that the elders and young men must go to hunt so that a sacrifice can be made to the ancestors before the land where a leader is to be buried is touched.

Land is valued as a resource of livelihood. The land produces food and water, which give life to all living things. When people go hunting or looking for herbs in the bush especially in KwaZulu, they burn incense and request their ancestors to give blessings to their foray and pray for the land to be dug. The custom of asking for rain or making rain through the help of the ancestors and God still features strongly in some communities. People either go to the mountain as a community, or a rainmaker coordinates the process. Climbing the mountain to pray also happens when a certain disaster has befallen a community and there is a feeling that God has left or turned against them. The mountain on which they pray is always valued, respected and reserved as a sacred or a holy place. A few communities continue to make sacrifices before they eat from the year's harvest to thank God and their ancestors. Every time the South African Council of Churches (SACC) meets with communities which struggle for ancestral land, we start with prayer under a shelter or in ancestral graveyards.

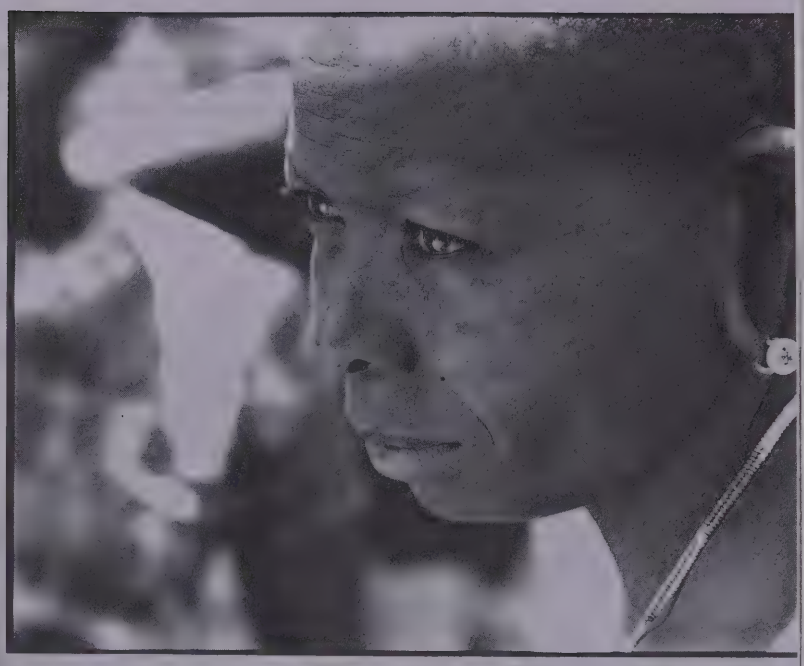
Factional fighting and political violence can often be traced back to the struggle for land. Many South Africans are still in exile in their own country or outside because they were pushed into homelands or 'reserves' where most of them were impoverished, overcrowded and unemployed. People were evicted and replaced by trees and animals. It is shameful that, in some cases, the churches that own vast tracts of land were among those who dispossessed people of their ancestral land.

The barriers to free movement imposed by the previous regime met with a lot of resistance because territorial borders were an important factor in peoples beliefs regarding land. For example, the BaTswana believe that God gave them the North West while the AmaZulu believe that the KwaZulu Natal Province is theirs and the place where their cultural beliefs should be maintained.

## Challenges and Lessons Learnt

Policy changes, legislative and constitutional reforms are not solutions without the commitment of decision-makers to the process. Resistance to change by directly affected stakeholders, especially the present owners of land, poses a serious challenge and threat to peace. The continued evictions and deaths of farm-dwellers/tenants, and the deaths of many white farmers – which is seen as retaliation on one hand, and a way of deliberately getting the white farmers off the land on the other – creates uncertainty about the future of the Land Reform. Loss of a sense of community and further destruction of moral fibre in our society raises more questions than answers about land and our spirituality as Africans. A growing tendency towards greed and commercialization of land, even by Africans and especially in urban areas, gradually destroys the sense of 'Ubuntu' which is the basis of our spirituality. Failure to provide answers to the land question through Land Reform has led to a number of invasions by frustrated and desperate communities who desperately want to return to their land.

The feeling of despondency and confusion about the existence of God and his presence amongst the victims of landlessness poses a challenge to the Church and to society. The fast-growing number of poor people exacerbates the problem because, in the African context, it is attributed to dispossession, and preventing of Black Africans from acquiring land. Since land is life, there is no life for many. What is needed is a concerted effort by government to solve land struggles in a peaceful way.



*Maasai woman from Tanzania*
*© WCC Photo - Peter Williams*

# THE CASE OF THE MAASAI IN TANZANIA

## by Mr O. Karyongi

The Maasai believe that land is the basis for livelihood, given that:

- The earth provides grass, other plants and water on which their livestock depend for survival.
- The earth provides the water and air which keep human beings alive.
- That on the earth (land) grow plants which provide them with materials for house-building and shade; energy for food preparation and other uses; utensils (guards, bowls, etc.); sacred plants (oreteti), used for meetings, rituals and medicines.
- Sacred mountains, hills and other lands – the 'endoinyoormorwak', where age groups graduate to eldership, and the 'mukulat', where age groups begin – constitute a vital element in rituals which must be performed regularly.

In the Arusha region, some non-Maasai tribes – the Sonjo, the Ndorobo (closely related to the Maasai), the Wahadzabe and the Banbaig – have spiritual attachments to land, though in different ways than the Maasai.

In general therefore, the Maasai and these other tribes are strongly attached to land spiritually. Should the situation of the land they occupy or use for their rituals and living be tempered with, they will be spiritually disturbed.

### The lands lost by the Tanzanian Maasai

The highlands of West Kilimanjaro, of Mount Meru, of Ngorongoro, the Ngorongoro Crater and the Serengeti plains was originally Maasai land. None is today occupied by the Maasai. Some were taken from the 1940s onwards by the colonial rulers and given to white settlers on 99-year leases. Some were taken by the colonial rulers, and later by the post-independence government for national parks and conservation areas. As a result, the Maasai were pushed aside to the marginal lands on which their survival has been nomadic and full of uncertainty.

It is surprising to note that over the last twenty years, the government of Tanzania has again been allocating land from the Maasai Districts to large-scale export bean farmers (mostly foreigners), game reserves, military camps and recreational facilities. The Maasai people have had enough of being pushed around and have gone to courts of law to petition against some of these allocations, while in some cases physical confrontation has been preferred.

There is also serious dispute between the Maasai and the Chagga tribe because the latter began cultivating part of the land of Endoinyoormorwak hill which is used for worship by the Maasai. The Maasai have pleaded with government to remove intruders and have also applied for ownership of the hill. A legal body has been formed as a Maasai Trust and its constitution submitted to the government for official registration.

*From left, Salau Ole Koros, Marry Simat, Kenny Matampash, Rose Kudate, Maasais from Kenya attending the 15th session of the UN Working Group on Indigenous Peoples in Geneva, 1997 and celebrating the 20th anniversary of the first international NGO conference on Indigenous Peoples of the Americas in 1977.*
*© WCC Photo - Catherine Alt*

# WOMEN AND LAND

## by Ms Nancy Kireu, Kenya

The Maasai never owned land – people lived on and used the land. Men are the heads of the household (in the sense that they lead, although women are the ones who deal with real 'issues'). When the government embarked on land distribution programmes, it was men who were given land. The land was not fertile land. When the land was first divided, people did not understand they would own it. It was given to many outsiders, and women were not permitted to participate in discussions on the land issue. Currently widows and single women do not have the right to own land.

The Maasai culture discriminates greatly against women. Men can sell land without consulting women. Women and children suffer most from these acts.

Boys are sent to school while girls are not. They are seen as a source of wealth when they are ready to be married off. During colonization the few who went to school were sent by education commissioners, who forced people to send their sons to school. Maasai girls received their education at boarding schools before independence. The education provided to Maasai girls by churches is standard education which is given to both sexes. In addition though, girls are kept in touch with their cultures through storytelling and being taught about their cultures. After primary school, children go back and are integrated into their societies. At the age of between 18 and 21, children finish school and most girls get married.

Because of sub-divisions, women have to walk far to fetch water and to water their animals. They cannot get into nearby ranches to fetch wood and water as they are mostly privately owned. Because of the difficulties they face at home, some Maasai women have resorted to going into towns and getting themselves involved with men, some of whom have AIDS. Maasai women are generally very conservative and hardly involve themselves with women from urban areas.

# THOSE WHO DO NOT KNOW THE VILLAGE THEY COME FROM, WILL NOT FIND THE VILLAGE THEY ARE LOOKING FOR."

**by Rev. Rupert Hambira, Botswana Christian Council**

It seems to me there has always been a very close link between people's faith and their status or relationship to the land. One does not have to look far for an example of this relationship. The Bible itself, particularly the book of Exodus, starts with a story of a people, of a community in transit, a community in search of a promised land, a community in motion on a journey that has been prompted by a promise, a community with a goal, a goal that has taken precedence over everything else in their lives: the search for land they could call their own, a piece of land they could call home.

These people's journey is not merely a product of their intellectual genius or innovation. It is a process in which God is involved, a process in which the role and presence of God is paramount. Thus the journey in which these people are involved is not just physical but also spiritual. It is a spiritual process undertaken in obedience to God's calling. It is an exercise undertaken in trust to the promise that God has made. The spirituality that motivates, drives and even propels this people is therefore, at least primarily, a spirituality of possessing their own land. A piece of land in their own name, a piece of land to which their identity as a people is linked or a piece of land from which their identity can be traced. It seems to me as if these people were unable to think of someone being human if they did not have a piece of land that they could call their own.

This link between spirituality and the land seems to apply not only to ancient Israel. Rather, it seems to be a common denominator in the life and faith of all traditional religious communities. An abstract spirituality that does not spring from the people's daily lives, work and experiences seems to be alien and inconsistent with the biblical tradition. Spirituality seems to be always socially, culturally and even economically conditioned, determined and shaped.

*A farmer attends his vegetable garden in Waka Tiyo, a small village in Ethiopia*

*© WCC Photo - Peter Williams*

In dealing with the challenges that are raised by Indigenous communities with particular reference to their land claims, we are not pulling the church into an area which it should not be involved, or into politics. We are, rather, dealing with genuinely spiritual concerns that have always shaped the spiritual journey of the people of God. The question of land, which is the primary source and sustainer of human life, cannot but be central to the spirituality of all the Indigenous communities.

Let me now attempt to illustrate in a little more detail why the question of access to land and a harmonious relationship to it is so central not only for the spirituality but the overall world-view of Indigenous communities in general, but even more particularly the San of Southern Africa.

I have read many stories and folk tales about the origins of human life, and the most striking common characteristic of all these stories, including the one we find in the Bible at the beginning of the book of Genesis, is that they all point to the earth, literally to the soil, as the place, as the substance from which human life first emerged, or the substance from which human life was created. Examined from a Christian theological perspective, this may mean that:

- quite apart from just being the source of human sustenance, the earth is even more primarily and fundamentally the raw material, the basis without which creation – or at least human creation – could not have been possible in the first place;
- dignified, meaningful, human life is not possible without access, without one being connected to the mother earth; and
- one is even tempted to go a little further to suggest that violation of peoples' rights to land is tantamount to violating the very image of God in which they were created.

It seems to me that it may not be possible to conceptualise how one has been created in the image of God in a situation in which one is dispossessed of the land. I can push this argument a little further to say that I cannot imagine how anyone can be human in a situation in which he/she is denied free access, use and life on a piece of land that he/she deems their

own ancestral home.

I conclude that denying people access and custody of the land is destroying the image and likeness of God in which they are created. This seems the most fundamental and elementary human right, access to the God-given earth out of whose dust we were created, on whose life-giving energy our lives are sustained and to which we return upon our death for our final test. No policy of development therefore, no matter how good or well-meant its intentions, that forcefully removes the people from the land they consider their ancestral home can ever be either theologically or morally justifiable.

## Land is the Source of Food

Food is one of the most basic human needs, as we all know. Food, its sources, generation and security have always been the most primary preoccupation of all human communities. We first ensure food security before we turn to any other activity in life. This was the case with the ancient world and has remained so right up to our own time in contemporary technological societies. No wonder the concern with food and the protection of its sources permeates all human thought and activity. Anyone who takes the Judeo-Christian scriptures seriously will know that food was very central to the spiritual formation and direction of this community. The Passover meal for example and the Christian celebration of the Eucharist are at the very heart of these two faiths. Whatever, therefore, threatens the people's source of livelihood, whatever threatens their source of food threatens their very existence. It threatens everything they are, it threatens them not only socially, economically and morally, but such a threat is actually a spiritual threat at the same time. Whatever threatens the people's primary source of livelihood is a spiritual threat. Whatever deals with the people and the circumstances under which they live their life on earth is always a spiritual concern. In other words, it always either directly or indirectly shapes their view of God, or the kind of God they would like to follow. Whatever therefore threatens the people's sources of livelihood can never be justifiable either morally or theologically.

## Land is a Hunting Ground

While hunting is basically a subsistence activity, and while San communities basically hunt for their immediate day-to-day food needs, it is essential not to lose sight of the fact that in these communities hunting also serves other purposes. Some such other important functions of hunting include:

- its role in the development of life and survival skills in an ever-harsh environment. In other words hunting is an exercise or a process of informal learning.
- as a means whereby essential survival skills were passed from one generation to another.
- as a means whereby parents helped to prepare their children for the challenges and responsibilities of adult life.
- as a way in which leadership could be identified. Future community leaders were identified according to the skills, courage, strength, wisdom, perceptivity in the service of others and the wider community, demonstrated during hunting.

Far from just being a consumption-based activity, hunting was and is still a social community-building and leadership capacity-building exercise. Leisure, recreation, the building of team spirit, group dynamic skills acquisition have always been essential components for the building of a healthy well-rounded community life. Whatever threatens and or curtails this process, no matter what the justification, interferes with very essential processes of socialising of the youths of San communities into responsible and well-rounded adults.

## Source of Shelter

Everyone needs a place we can refer to as home. A place where we are in control, a place where we have our roots, a place where we can be ourselves away from the many pretences of our hectic daily life. No one rests unless they are at home. In removing the Indigenous Peoples from their ancestral homes for the sake of building dams, tourism, mining and

*Hunting also serves other purposes than just being a subsistence activity © WCC Photo - Peter Williams*

*Everyone needs a place we can refer to as home*
*© WCC Photo - Peter Williams*

all such other economic activities (which are no doubt very essential for the life of our nation), we are all the same depriving them of a place of their own, a place they could call home. In being moved from their ancestral home to live under the jurisdiction of other groups in differently organized and structured communities, the San communities are denied their very essential God-given dignity. Anything that takes away a community's ability to determine its own destiny and direction is evil, whether or not the one that takes away such ability is kind and benevolent, or cruel and harsh.

## Source of Tools

I have often wondered if we realize how much the tools, the implements and the technology that a person has at his disposal will influence and even shape his outlook and spirituality.

In the biblical tradition, for example, when a community was struck by some hardship like a human epidemic or one that affects livestock or crops, (or even natural phenomenon like drought, floods, volcanic eruption and so on) the cause was always traceable to the possibility of human sin. With the advances (in the last century) in science and technology such events are interpreted differently. Technology has helped to identify other causes, and our understanding of God and God's place has changed. Technology – the kind of tools that the people have at their disposal – is power, and depriving people of the basic source of their tools is the most crude form of dis-empowering them. Alienating the people from the land is therefore really and truly a political as well as spiritual alienation.

## Their Burial Ground

Not only for the San but also for the entire African world-view, life is a continuum that links people including the yet unborn, the living and the departed. It is an unbroken cycle. There is and has always been a sense of community, fellowship, communication and even mutual counsel that embraces all these levels of our existence. The place and places at which people down the centuries have buried their dead are therefore of great historical as well as cultural significance to the life journey. They are an important link with the life behind and at the same time serve as important signposts for the journey that still lies ahead of us. Signs, symbols and shrines have always had a very important religious value. They have always been regarded as a holy ground of some kind. They cannot and should not be either spoiled or violated. This is among others one of the major reasons why the sites where people have buried generations of their forebears are actually revered as nothing less than sacred. Removing these people or just denying them access to such important landmarks in their world-view is a terrible misunderstanding of their cultural roots as well as a denial of a fundamental spiritual and religious right.

## Source of Health

Concern for and with good health is probably the second-most fundamental human preoccupation after food security. No one can deny the fact that each human community has some share in the great wisdom of healing. It is still true that more people have access to the traditional forms of healing than to modern scientific forms. This wisdom is a sacred gift to humanity that flows from God, mother earth and the collective life of the society. A lot of what I have already said when dealing with the land as the source of our tools applies here also. Yet it is here where the relationship and, at times, entire dependence of Indigenous spirituality on the land is most evident. The wisdom of the San communities always points them to certain roots that can be used to cure disease. This is why a familiar piece of land is essential. Pushing them off such land for whatever reason is denying and depriving them of the life-sustaining wisdom without which they find it very difficult to subsist. Health, like food, is not only a physical or a psychological concern. It also has everything to do with the spiritual welfare of the people. Dislocating people from the primary source of their health and well-being is, therefore, in every sense a spiritual concern.

## Concluding Remarks

I have yet to find an African who can convincingly argue that there is no link between a people's spirituality and their status or relationship to the land. All the major wars of liberation on this sub-continent were to liberate the land. The source of our bitterness against colonialism was the stolen land. I therefore find it difficult to understand why we find it so difficult when Indigenous communities like the San people, in exactly the same way, register their land-related claims as a spiritual and human right without which a dignified life is not possible.

People are the subject of development. It is supposed to be aimed at the betterment of the quality of life of every citizen of the world. Development is supposed to follow the people, not the other way around. Development is supposed to suit the people and not the people to suit development. If Africa does not learn this lesson now, all our efforts at development will be in vain, because Africa is ultimately only as strong as its communities.

*Clotilde Masabeyezu, Batwa, Line Skum, Sami, Paul Neshangwe, Shona*

# I asked myself: what does being Indigenous mean?

**Te Rua Winiata** is an Indigenous person from Aotearoa-New Zealand. In July this year she was a participant in the WCC consultation "Indigenous Peoples, Knowledge and Identity" held in Quezon City, Philippines. The consultation was attended by Indigenous representatives from Australia, Canada, Norway, Burma, Taiwan, West Papua, Timor, Thailand, India, the Philippines as well as Aotearoa-New Zealand. After the meeting Te Rua wrote of her experience:

We all came under the label of "Indigenous Peoples". While we recognized some commonalities we recognized even more diversity. However the diversities were an enhancement to our relationships rather than being problematic. We talked about an indigenous way of life being holistic. I'm still not sure what that meant.

For me, as a Maori from Aotearoa, my understanding of an holistic approach to life, is the recognition that for my basic and total well-being there needs to be a balance between the *taha wairua* (spiritual), *tinana* (physical), *te hinengaro* (emotional) and *te whanau* (family/identity).

There is a recognition of the relationship between the earth and the sky and all that comes between. I learn how I am part of the whole. Therefore I can say I belong to the earth. I do not own the land nor do I have dominion over the land. I understand that my relationship with creation means that I have a responsibility to care for *Papatuanuku* (earth) who provides me with the resources I need for life. To needlessly destroy or take more than my share of the resources, is to walk the path of self-destruction.

Although this becomes harder in today's context, it is still possible and even more important because Indigenous Peoples are usually the minority group in their countries. However, the changes in the ecological balance are obvious and Papatuanuku groans as humankind continues to poison and destroy her. She will not allow this to continue for ever and gradually we can see the changes happening. As an Indigenous person, with the knowledge that I hold, I must continue to be with Papatuanuku in the struggle to correct the imbalances. I was not sure if this was the understandings all Indigenous Peoples held.

Amongst the people I met, were realities of ex-

*Te Rua Winiata, Maori*

treme poverty, a lack of adequate resources for basic living, inadequate education systems, oppression, militarization. Yet some still found hope in a pool of hopelessness.

The imbalances are far greater than in Aotearoa. So what could I share? The colonial histories are very similar; the ongoing land struggles come from a similar experience but we are certainly not equal.

The challenges the group faced included:

- Being colonized – having others wanting to civilize us;
- Loss of language and identity;
- Oppression by the majority (in most situations); the government and the Church;
- Poverty and lack of resources.

- They (the church) expect us to fail.
- We have lost our language and identity.
- They (the governments) want to assimilate Indigenous Peoples into the majority.
- The missionaries told us our ways were pagan and they have been lost.
- We need to build up our self-esteem.
- As Indigenous Peoples, education of the colonizers was denied us.
- We are the oppressed.
- We are marginalized.
- We are voiceless

Yet,

- We are still alive
- We belong to the Earth
- We have not given up
- We are spiritually strong
- We have hope

For many Indigenous Peoples, learning is also a collective experience. Members of a community come together for a *hui* because it is an opportunity of being together as much as it is an opportunity for learning. Co-learning continually takes place with "teachers" becoming "learners" as often as "learners" become "teachers". In this situation interaction is open between participants so that the whole person is open to whatever is offered. Whatever the reason for being present on these occasions, learning will happen although it may not be immediately obvious to either the teacher or the learner.

*Yuuki Hasegawa, Ainu*

*Olga Melentieva and Elvira Galkina, Sami of Russia*

# IS FIVE HUNDRED AND SEVEN YEARS TOO LONG FOR JUSTICE?

**By Sharon H. Venne**
**Cree Nation**
**Great Turtle Island**[1]

*Steve Paterson, Tuscarora and chief Oriel Lyons, Onondaga*
*© WCC Photo - Catherine Alt*

Let me tell you a story[2]. It is a story of five hundred years of oppression. It is a story of hope for the future generations.

When Columbus came across the great pond known as the Atlantic Ocean and fell onto the shores of Indigenous Peoples, our view of the world was overtaken by the colonizers. They changed the name of our lands to their names, calling our lands "America". If the name is to be America then it should be Indigenous America. These are our lands and territories. We are still alive to talk and write about our own history and our own view of the world. This short essay is about our work at the United Nations (UN) and our attempts to place ourselves among the family of nations. We have worked to have our rights recognized as a collective. We Indigenous Peoples want to have our right to self-determination recognized since we are peoples. We are human beings. It has been a long time since the family of nations recognized us as nations.

At contact with Europeans, each of the hundreds of Indigenous Peoples of Indigenous America possessed all the elements of nationhood that were well-established by European settlers: territory, governing structures, legal systems and a historical continuity with our territories. All Indigenous Nations were and remain sovereign in our own rights. Nothing since the arrival of Columbus has occurred to merit any reduction in the international legal status of Indigenous Peoples. The recognition of Indigenous Nations and our rights poses no threat to non-Indigenous Peoples.

According to the documents of the time, Europeans were generally unsure about the status of the peoples they encountered, who fell outside of the Christian family of nations. In the fourteenth and fifteenth centuries, the Catholic Church issued numerous papal bulls relating to the rights of Europeans in Indigenous territories. *Romanus Pontifax* (1455) for example, denied people living overseas from Europe any rights to lands and possessions, thereby allowing Christian monarchs to claim our lands and territories. With the legal support of the Pope, the "new world" was thus divided between the Portuguese and the Spanish.

Atrocities committed by explorers against inhabitants of lands sought as colonies became known in Portugal and Spain. This knowledge resulted in a public debate led by scholars, which had a profound effect on contemporary legal thinking about the rights of Indigenous Peoples. One side of this debate was a departure from accepted contemporary international law norms. This view held that peoples indigenous to these newly discovered lands were not human, owing to their lack of Christian knowledge, and, therefore, did not possess the same rights as Europeans; scholars, such as Bartolomé de Las Casas, urged the conversion of the Indigenous inhabitants rather than the slaughter and enslavement that was occurring. Las Casas was able to persuade the Spanish king to suspend the licensing of permits in Indigenous Peoples' lands while the debates pursued; however, when they continued for many months without a clear conclusion, expeditions were resumed. The opposing side held that the Indigenous inhabitants were human and had rights that needed to be respected; this view was based on the international legal norms of the time.

A seminal legal essay of 1532, *De India et De Jure Belli Reflections*, was Francisco de Vitoria's review of the rights of Indigenous Peoples. He argued that Indigenous Nations were the true owners of our lands and territories and, as such, could not be dispossessed of our territories through the doctrine of discovery or *terra nullius*. Vitoria argued that title to the lands of Indigenous Peoples could not be conveyed to a European power – title could not be derived by either the Spanish monarchy or the pope, whose authority did not extend to secular matters. Thus, by Vitoria's legal reasoning, the Spanish could not acquire title to Indigenous lands through discovery. With recognition that title to our lands was vested in Indigenous Peoples, Vitoria also held that our lands could be surrendered as a result of a "just war" waged to Christianize us. For the Christian nations, then, the mission to convert Indigenous inhabitants could justify continued atrocities and the claiming of our lands and territories by the colonizers. This "just war" continues to this day.

*Chief Willy Little Child, Cree Nation and chief Oriel Lyons, Onondaga © WCC Photo, Catherine Alt*

*Loviana Esther, Erare, Irian Jaya*

*Yuuki Hasegawa, Ainu, Tomo Kawaguchi, Ainu*

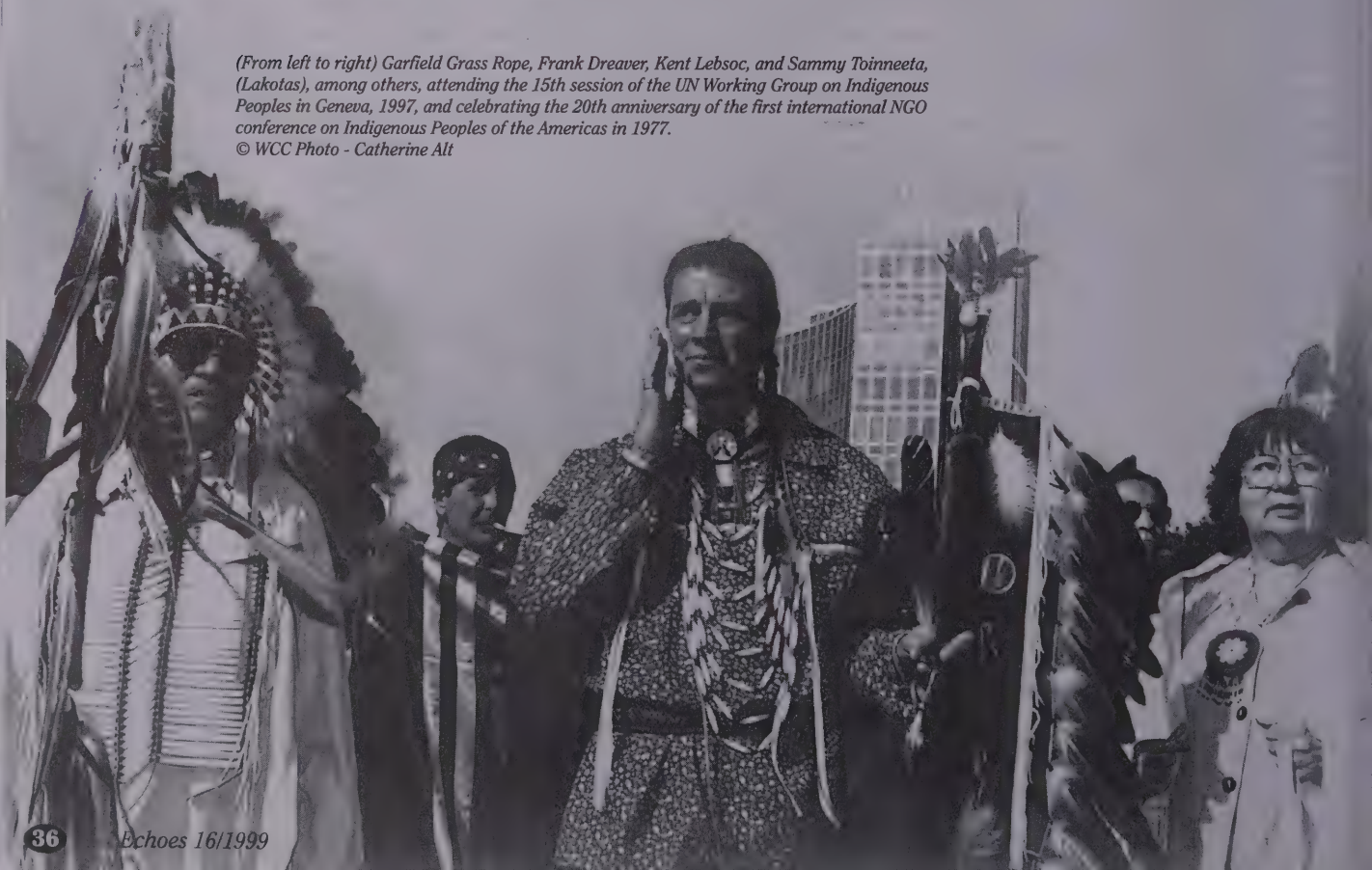
Part of the strategy of Indigenous Peoples to gain recognition for our lands and territories involves a lobby at the international level through the system known as the United Nations (UN). The UN is a complex and multi-layered body that is slow and cumbersome in its internal procedures. There are so many actors that need to be consulted on any issue. Indigenous Peoples have been learning the system and pushing forward towards being recognized as Peoples. In real terms, Indigenous Peoples have achieved a number of remarkable goals within the system: a study on treaties, a study on land rights, inclusion in the 1992 Rio Declaration and many other points of entry within the system.

When Indigenous Peoples came to the UN in 1977 as "outsiders" looking for our rightful place, we were met by state governments and the inherent prejudices against Indigenous Peoples. To overcome the prejudices, Indigenous Peoples have had to find our way among the different procedures and forums to create a space for ourselves. The struggle has been to break down the barriers that state governments have raised against Indigenous Peoples within and outside of the state system. Going to the UN was not intended as a promotion of the system but rather to concentrate efforts to break down the barriers of racism and colonization. Our struggle at the UN is a history of continued efforts to decolonize. Our focus has been our collective rights to our lands and territories, and this has been crystallized around the concept of self-determination.

When we reviewed the international legal instruments at the UN, we realized that these instruments did not protect our rights. The rights protected in those instruments were rights of the individual within a state system. If an Indigenous person had the same rights as a non-indigenous person within a state, their rights as an Indigenous person would be lost. For example, the right to an education. Whose education? An education within the Indigenous education system? Or within the colonizer's education system? Within the colonizer's education system, an Indigenous person is assimilated and lost to their collective identity. Our focus on collective rights is at odds with the UN focus on the rights of the individual. The approach to this problem was to promote the drafting of a declaration on our rights.

Initially, Indigenous Peoples did not think that the UN would draft such a document. In the early 1980's shortly after the founding of the permanent body of the UN known as the Working Group on Indigenous Peoples, Indigenous delegates in our own internal meetings started drafting our own declaration. At the time, Indigenous delegates wanted to draft an instrument that would encompass our rights and our understanding of our rights. As the years moved along, the number of principles in our draft reached twenty-one. The key provisions related to our right to self-determination, our land and resources rights and our collective rights as Peoples.

When the UN Working Group on Indigenous Peoples took up the task of drafting a declaration in the late 1980's, Indigenous Peoples were involved. We spent many hours in private meetings prior to each Working Group to determine our course of action. It became clear to us that there was going to



*(From left to right) Garfield Grass Rope, Frank Dreaver, Kent Lebsoc, and Sammy Toinneeta, (Lakotas), among others, attending the 15th session of the UN Working Group on Indigenous Peoples in Geneva, 1997, and celebrating the 20th anniversary of the first international NGO conference on Indigenous Peoples of the Americas in 1977.*
*© WCC Photo - Catherine Alt*

*Aaron Johannes, San, Xguku Krisjan, San*

be a struggle to get some minimum standards into the UN draft. It was absolutely necessary to have our right to self-determination recognized by the states within the UN.

The UN's recognition of self-determination as a governing principle in the determination of decolonization, and member states' acceptance of this principle was a primary objective. We have been living under colonial states since Columbus. We could not get access to the decolonization committee. We needed to find another way for our right of self-determination to be recognized. In the declaration, we wanted a clear statement of our right to self-determination. There were two major UN Covenants – the Covenant on Civil and Political Rights, and the Covenant on Economic, Social and Cultural Rights. Both have as their first article: "All Peoples have a right to self-determination..." This article does not apply to Indigenous Peoples. State governments have signalled their position. In 1988 and 1989, when the International Labour Organization (ILO) was revising its Convention 107, the revised ILO Convention 169 states explicitly that the use of the term "Indigenous Peoples" has no international legal meaning. It is clear to Indigenous Peoples that state governments do not consider us to be "Peoples". So that article in the two covenants should read: "All Peoples except Indigenous Peoples have the right to self-determination".

It is absolutely critical to Indigenous Peoples that the right of self-determination be included in the declaration. When there was an effort by state governments to have the language removed from the draft in early 1990, Indigenous Peoples stated that if self-determination was removed, they would need to condemn the whole process and step away from the draft declaration. For us, removing self-determination from the draft would be a strong and visible sign that after five hundred years, we are still not recognized as human beings.

Our position is clear. If it means walking away from the draft that we spent so much time and effort to draft, we will do so. We could wait for a better opportunity to push our rights. If state governments remove the right to self-determination, then the UN as a collective body is acting as a colonizer. Rather than promoting decolonization, it would merely be continuing the process. This would be a shame on all people from the family of nations.

*Sharon Helen Venne (Old woman Bear) is Cree but, through marriage, a citizen of the Blood Tribe in Treaty Seven. She has played an active role in the national and international struggles of many Indigenous Peoples, including the Lubicon Cree and Dineh Nation. Sharon has a Masters of Law degree from the University of Alberta, and is presently a doctorial candidate, writing a thesis on treaty rights of Indigenous Peoples and international law.*

Notes

1. Indigenous Peoples of my nation believe that we are living on the back of Great Turtle that relates to our creation story. So our land, that encompasses the present states of Canada, United States of America and Mexico, is known as Great Turtle Island.

2. Indigenous Peoples like to relate materials to a listener or reader via a story. Every person has a story. Coming from an oral tradition, story telling is a old practice and a good way to tell a history of work that has been done at the United Nations and the reasons for that work.

*Beverly Longid, Kankanaey-Igorot (Philippines)*

# INDIGENOUS SPIRITUALITY

## AYMARA SPIRITUALITY : A CHALLENGE FOR CHRISTIAN SPIRITUALITY

**REV. HUMBERTO RAMOS SALAZAR**

Let me set the context. The Christian church came to the Andean region in 1532 at the time of the conquest led by Francisco Pizarro. Since then there has been both the "Christian religion" and "ancestral religion". Because the Christian message was only partly understood by those who brought the Christian religion to the region, serious conflicts arose [1], costing the lives of millions of the Indigenous People of Abya Yala.

This misinterpretation no doubt persists even today in certain parts of the Christian church, both Roman Catholic and Protestant, causing a division between "Christian" and "ancestral" understanding in religious matters and in the daily life of faith in "God".

### Aymara Spirituality

When we speak of spirituality, we refer to the "*ruah*" of the Old Testament Hebrew texts or the "*pneuma*" of the New Testament texts. A certain conflict arises when I use the terms for spirit in the Aymara language : "*kamasa*" or "*ajayu*".

In Aymara spirituality, the words "kamasa" or "ajayu"– spirit – is the force of life itself; the force that gives life, the force that permits communion, that creates hope, that enables you to go forward into the future. It is the force that compels you to confront the signs of death , strength in times of weakness, renewed, eternal life ("*wiñay jacaña*").

Aymara spirituality can be seen in the praxis of the people [2], it is expressed in everyday life. It is the expression of solidarity, it is communion with the whole creation, the very life of the people with their successes and failures, weaknesses and strengths, their plans and their hopes.

Aymara spirituality, paradoxically, is the strength that accepts death as natural. The Aymara people are not afraid of natural death. On the contrary they accept it as part of every day life, part of life itself [3]. But on the other hand they resist it when death comes in an untimely fashion [4].

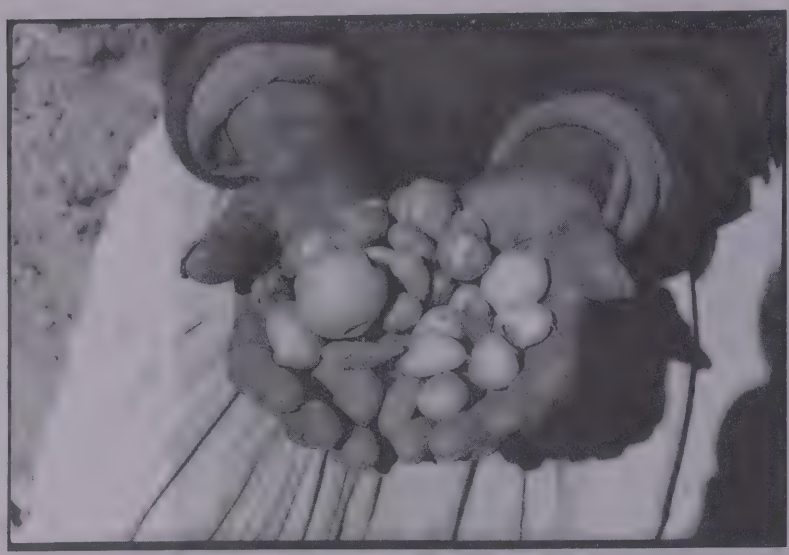
Aymara spirituality is not manifested exclusively in the sacred (the religious), but also in the profane (the ordinary), the whole of life.

Although the Aymara are known as melancholy, sharing, dialogue and, in a special way, celebration are an intrinsic part of their lives. No-one exists in the world alone, solitary life is the death of life. Their vision of the cosmos is based on the notion of the binary [5], of complementarity, of living in function of others and not of oneself. In their world, the neighbour, nature (animal, vegetable and mineral kingdom) and the Supreme Being are conceived of as the others with whom they seek to live in balance and harmony. Every being, animate or inanimate, has its complement. The human being (*jaqi*) is complete and an integral part of the community when s/he has formed a couple (man – woman = *chacha-warmi*). The *jaqi* is the image of the Supreme Being, the *jaqi* represents life.

Understanding Aymara spirituality as constantly renewed life [6], we must now describe how it is expressed. I have often wondered how the Aymara people have still maintained their identity through the centuries and have been amazed at their capacity to integrate elements of the other – the different, giving them new meanings, reinterpreting their world, without losing the essential of their own being, their spirit. One of the most striking examples is the festival of "*alasita*" [7] . This socio-religious-cultural activity involves in miniature all the elements that a

*The Aymara vision of the cosmos is based on the notion of the binary, of complementarity*
*© WCC Photo - Salgado Junior*

*We give thanks for the fruits of the earth - © WCC Photo - Peter Williams*



human being needs in his or her daily life, from the essential items in the family food basket (milk, bread, cereals, etc.) to the superfluous (a Toyota truck). Initially in the alasitas all the elements of daily life were present. Year by year, with the progress of technology, new items were included – computers, microwaves, cell phones, etc. – showing that the Aymara vision of the cosmos was taking account of the modern world, reinterpreting values and resituating itself in the global context.

Language is essential in any culture, for it is through language that the spirit and essence of cultures are expressed. The Aymara have preserved their language, which is rich in content and capable of describing both objects and actions in a very specific way. In the Aymara language, topography and cardinal direction can be precisely defined and various actions that would require a longer explanation in Spanish can be defined in a single term [8].

Solidarity is inherent in the spirit of the Aymara. Interaction within the community is the normal course of Aymara life and community as such develops on the basis of solidarity. When each person is capable of caring for others and trusting others [9], this reciprocity makes the community one body. This solidarity exists in everything, from the smallest to the largest.

Festivity and celebration are characteristic of the spirituality of the Aymara world. Spaces for encounter and relations with others are highly valued. Every event is an opportunity for celebration, from the birth of a new being to the death of a loved one. Communal work, labour on community tasks is a joyous occasion for those taking part. The sweat of toil mingles with satirical anecdotes about daily life which have the workers roaring with laughter. A community that does not celebrate is a dead one.

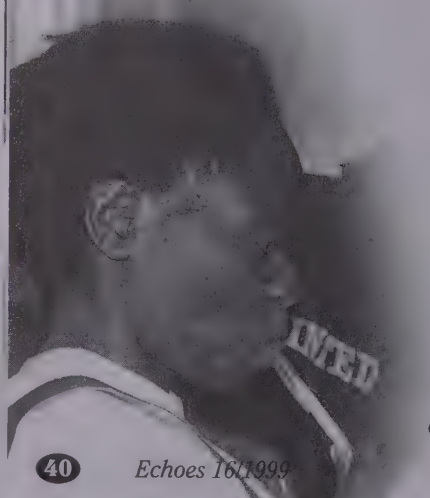
Religiosity is part of the Aymara's very being. The Aymara conceive of the Supreme Being as the creator of all things, everything was made by God – what we can see and feel and what we cannot see and cannot feel (the unknown). Because they recognize God as the supreme maker of the creation the Aymara are profoundly religious. A religious sense is expressed in different ways in everyday life, from constant thanksgiving to remorse and repentance for any harm they have done.

In their view of the cosmos the Aymara find God revealed in all creation (without falling into pantheism), in all that generates life and enables community. Natural phenomena which destroy life are understood as coming from God, as a warning or revelation to make them stop and think or to correct errors. In this sense, the Aymara never feel alone, they believe that God goes with them wherever they are and wherever they go. With this inherent sense of the religious, waking up in the morning is proof of the existence of God who allows the human being to see a new day, to see the plants growing. To see the arid land of the Altiplano gradually covered in green is to feel the presence of God. Gratitude and respect are a fundamental part of the religiosity of the Aymara world. A proud or arrogant attitude is condemned by the community as disrespectful of the Supreme Being who causes the dawn to break and the sun to set in the evening. Giving thanks as they eat; praying for the whole wide world that God will provide the daily food for all expresses their gratitude to God for the food they have and an attitude of love towards their neighbour. There is community prayer as seeds are planted in the soil, asking God to make them flourish and bear fruit, acknowledging God in his infinite goodness.

Penitence and forgiveness are not just a personal affair, they also concerns the whole community. For this reason the authorities (*jilaqatas or mallkus*) call a meeting every year on the day of penitence and forgiveness. It starts with a communal meal primarily given over to quiet reflection; it continues with forgiveness – forgiveness asked of God for actions and thoughts, then of all the members of the community from the oldest to the youngest, asking forgiveness even for actions that harmed animals, plants and the natural world which God has given us to care for and live in. Penitence and forgiveness culminate in a celebration, in the firm belief that God hears such pleas and true repentance.

## Christian spirituality

Since this is a reflection in an Aymara-Christian perspective, I should also refer to Christian spirituality. I prefer to continue with the concept of "ruah" mentioned at the



*Clotilde Masabeyezu, Batwa*

*Richard Louse P. Bagayao, Igorot*

*Tomo Kawaguchi, Ainu*

beginning of this article because it comes closer to the Aymara understanding of the world; taking the texts of En 1:2, "*and the Spirit of God moved over the face of the waters...*" and Gen 2:7 "*Then the Lord God formed man from the dust of the ground and breathed into his nostrils the breath of life; and the man became a living being.*" These two texts speak to us of the beginning of the creation both of the world and of humankind. Both show that the Spirit of God is the source of life: in the first case a force flows through the creation establishing order and in the second man is created by God. We find the continuity of this central thought in Lk 4:18 ff: "*The Spirit of the Lord is upon me because he as anointed me to bring good news to the poor...*"

"Spirituality" is thus to be understood as the expression of the Spirit of God in our lives. The (Christian) church links spirituality with the dogmatics of ecclesiology, in relation to the third person of the Trinity: God the Father, Son and Holy Spirit. In this sense there is a link with the coming of the Holy Spirit which gives rise to the first church community, as told in Acts 2. In my understanding, however, the Spirit of God or the Holy Spirit mentioned in the New Testament is not a force that is revealed only in churches or to people gathered on Sundays.

Spirituality is the revelation of God in our most intimate being; it is our daily living experience of our faith in Jesus Christ, our Lord and saviour, who came to overcome death and will come again in glory. Faith which sets us free to be messengers of the good news to our neighbours, building the Kingdom of God in the community of those who love life and seeking to give others the hope we are shown in Rev. 21:1ff: "*See, the home of God is among mortals. He will dwell with them as their God; they will be his peoples, and God himself will be with them; he will wipe every tear from their eyes. Death will be no more....*" A message of hope in the midst of despair, in moments when we think God has abandoned us. Christian communities rejoice in the God of life as they reflect on the Word, sharing their faith and strengthening one another through common projects that lay the foundations for life.

Spirituality is the intimate living experience of our faith in Jesus Christ, in the God of our ancestors, Abraham, Isaac and Jacob. It is living our daily lives with constant a point of reference (our north), which are projects that promote life in face of the signs of death.

## Conclusion

I shall conclude with the controversy concerning the absolute claim of Christianity. What has been said about Aymara spirituality and Christian spirituality shows clearly that the absolute claim of Christianity has been overcome, and it is "legitimate" to be an indigenous Christian.

Indigenous spirituality concentrates on living a full life in relation with the whole creation, as a commandment from God himself. We find the same form in the Bible, for this is the commandment given to Christians by the "God of Scripture". Consequently, there are no points of contradiction or opposition. On the contrary, the two are complementary and they enable Indigenous People (Aymara) who have chosen to follow Jesus Christ to live their spirituality in a human and dignified way, avoiding conflicts of identity and denial of their sense of self. Trusting in the power of God at work in all cultures and showing itself in different ways, we live out our faith day by day in the God who is the God of History and the God of life.

## GLOSSARY:

| | |
|---|---|
| Jaqi : | Human Being |
| Warmi: | Woman |
| Chacha: | Man |
| Kamsa: | Breath, force, Spirit |
| Ayayu: | Breath, soul, Spirit |
| Wiñay Jakana: | Eternal Life |
| Alasita: | Buy me |
| Jilaqata: | Authority of the Aymara community |
| Mallku: | Authority of the Aymara community |

Notes:

1. Actions which caused conflicts because of the political-religious context of the Christian kings. Moors against Christians.
2. Anthropologists agree in saying that the Aymara people may be characterized by orthopraxis, as opposed to western culture which is characterized by orthodoxy.
3. On the understanding of death, the best example to illustrate this is the feast of "All Saints" (1 and 2

November), when it is thought that the "ajayu" comes for three consecutive years to take leave of loved ones.
4. For example, the death of a young person, accidents, suicide (strongly condemned) and other such things.
5. We deliberately use the word "binary" rather than "dual". Binary refers to different but complementary forces, while dual refers to different but comparable forces.
6. Renewed is used in this article as changed, but with a sense of continuity.
7. Alasitas, is a socio-religious event held every year on 24 January in the city of La Paz (Choquezapu). In recent years it has turned into a market place.
8. For example, the word **to lift** or **to raise**. In Aymara it is possible to indicate both the action and the type of object being lifted. *Waytaña* = to lift an object with a handle (e.g. a bucket or a keg); *aytaña* = to lift a large object; *itthaña* = to lift a heavy object (e.g. a parcel); *astaña* = to lift something with a small handle; *iqtaña* to lift a flat object (e.g. a napkin or a tablecloth); etc.
9. In Aymara the verbs are conjugated in two persons: *Jupa* = he or she, *naya* = I; *jupanaka* = they, *jiwanaka* = we. The verb does not begin with the personal "I", but with the other person.

*Humberto Ramos Salazar is a Bolivian Aymara. He is a member and pastor of the Lutheran church. He did his theological studies in Buenos Aires (ISEDET) and most of his work has been done in ecumenical institutions.*

# LETTER TO THE WCC MEMBER CHURCHES ON THE WORLD TRADE ORGANIZATION (WTO)

On November 29 through to December 3, 1999, the Third Ministerial Round of the World Trade Organization (WTO) will be held in Seattle (USA). The Justice, Peace, Creation team of the World Council of Churches (WCC), in response to a recommendation from its Central Committee, is currently encouraging Christians and churches to prepare for this upcoming negotiating round, and to assess of the WTO in the context of globalization.

Christians and churches can contribute to public debate and support the resistance and search for alternatives with their solidarity, ethical and spiritual discernment and life-affirming convictions. Encouraged by the members of the Central Committee who met in September 1999 in Geneva, we share with you a number of concrete proposals for the forthcoming Third WTO Ministerial Round. We informed the WTO director-general, Mike Moore, about the content of this document during his visit to the WCC on October 7, 1999.

Should there be an expansion of the role and influence of the WTO, or a moratorium for new issues on its agenda until many of the imbalances and conflicts around WTO agreements and procedures are resolved? That is a vital question in preparing for the WTO's next Ministerial Round.

Peoples' movements – of peasants, Indigenous peoples and women – together with trade unions, and ecology and civil society groups around the world will be raising their voices around on this event. They do not wish just to watch and let things be decided for them. They are ready to mobilize global support in favour of those increasingly impoverished and disempowered by the consequences of accelerated economic globalization. What does the WTO really do to the world, to the people?

We do not know what the 21st century has in store for us. But we do know that we have the capacity to shape our future, with God's grace and in cooperation and solidarity with people of good will around the world. We know of God's love for all life including our own, which liberates us to accept this challenge. The death and resurrection of Jesus Christ enables us to overcome our fear of this world and gives us the courage to engage ourselves and become active.

These basic convictions should undergird, motivate and guide any action by Christians and churches in response to the challenges of economic globalization. We have an important contribution to make to the ongoing debate. With our experience, knowledge and expertise in different fields, many of us can also contribute to developing more concrete alternatives.

Some recent examples of the potential for broad public widespread engagement in macro-economic issues should encourage us. The support for the Jubilee Debt Cancellation Campaign, and public outcry over the proposed OECD Multilateral Agreement on Investment indicate that people will respond actively when they perceive that a fundamental issue of justice is at stake, and when they have a constructive opportunity for action.

The WTO needs structural change. We encourage you to give your energy and knowledge to this end. Please continue your involvement and build linkages with others sharing the same concerns. Contact your government, ask them about their position regarding the negotiations. Share with them the concerns you have in common with so many others. And please let us know what you do so that we can identify new partners for our work, and help to build alliances around the globe.

# CONCRETE PROPOSALS

## REGARDING THE THIRD MINISTERIAL ROUND OF THE WORLD TRADE ORGANIZATION (WTO)

### ON NOVEMBER 30-DECEMBER 3, 1999 IN SEATTLE, USA

The Justice, Peace, Creation team of the WCC organized a small meeting in September 1999 in Geneva to analyze and evaluate preparations for the Third Ministerial Round of the World Trade Organization (WTO) in Seattle. The group included experts and representatives of networks working on environmental issues, agriculture, international trade and finance, and the funds, programmes and agencies of the UN system.

A number of already existing agreements are up for review by the WTO. The list includes agreements on agriculture, textiles, services, and trade-related intellectual property rights. Highly industrialized countries want to add to this list and introduce new issues to the WTO agenda. Many of the developing countries, however, are opposed to these efforts.

Developing countries first want to overcome the existing imbalances in agreements, rules of procedure and processes that work to their disadvantage. Social movements and civil society groups are calling for more transparency and accountability on the part of the WTO. They want to re-define WTO's role in the UN system.

Many of the WCC member churches, church-related development agencies and ecumenical groups are preparing themselves for the Third WTO Ministerial Round. Some of them have started to contact the ministries of trade and finance of their respective governments. Based on the insights and criteria presented in the Background Document on the WTO, the group that met in Geneva in September wanted to contribute to preparations by ecumenical partners and share the following concrete proposals with them:

1. Oppositions to any efforts to expand the power of the WTO through a deepening and extension of trade liberalization is a high priority. The new negotiations should accept the primacy of the developing countries' concerns and their proposals for "review, repair and reform" of the old agreements. Their concerns must be satisfied, without any cross-sectoral bargaining (early harvest). This especially refers to improvements to the Agreements on Agriculture, Trade-Related Intellectual Property Rights (TRIPS), Services (GATS) and Textiles that were proposed and tabled by developing countries.

2. A moratorium is required on new issues or regarding the further development of international harmonization of standards, policies or laws. As in the case of social standards, where the discussion was referred to the International Labour Office (ILO) as the appropriate international organization, the development of trade-related environmental standards should not be the task of the WTO. The existing Multilateral Environmental Agreements ought not be challenged, new MEAs ought to be left to the other mandated UN organizations, and existing national standards should be mutually recognized.

3. Further work on the Competition Law needs to be initiated in order to study:
- how to fight restrictive business practices in international trade,
- how to arrive at a code of conduct for transnational corporations and
- how to assist developing countries to set up their own national competition laws.

4. The new negotiations should primarily aim to reform the WTO in order to
- make it more transparent,
- make the negotiations more accountable, by providing binding procedures for national delegations and for the WTO Committees to have consultation processes with civil society, parliaments and the private sector.

5. The Dispute Settlement Processes need to leave ample room for also considering non-trade-related concerns brought forward by other parties. It would be helpful to explore and develop possibilities for appeal outside the WTO, but within the UN System.

6. The WTO needs to open itself up to other UN organizations and come to binding contracts of coordination. The UN Sub-Commission on Human Rights, for example, called for appropriate mechanisms regarding Human Rights.

7. As part of the preparatory process, churches might hold public hearings, church discussions, prayer vigils, public and peaceful protest action, and inform mass media about their concerns regarding the WTO Ministerial Round.

*A background document on the WTO and the preparatory process for the WTO Ministerial Round (30 November – 3 December, 1999) in Seattle, is available from the JPC team, WCC (our current address) and on our web-site at http://www.wcc-coe.org/wcc/what/jpc/conc-e.html#econ*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*Gillian Paterson*

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ECONOMIC, SOCIAL AND CULTURAL RIGHTS IN A NEW PERSPECTIVE
*Bas de Gaay Fortman and Berma Klein Goldewijk*

The focus of this book is on people in distress – those who are poor, displaced and most vulnerable in this time of violent conflicts and globalization. Although the human economic, social and cultural rights – to adequate living standards, access to health services and education – are recognized internationally, far more attention in promoting and protecting human rights goes to civil and political rights. The authors identify human needs and human dignity as a central focus for the struggle to implement socio-economic rights, and underscore the role of religion in achieving such a transformation.

*2-8254-1319-4, approx. 160pp. Sfr.15.00, US$9.95, £6.50. Risk Book Series. Forthcoming*

## WCC general secretary welcomes new WTO leader

New director-general of the WTO (Mike Moore) greeted by WCC general secretary (Konrad Raiser) when he met with WCC programme staff involved in issues of globalization. There is now an agreement to hold further discussions.

# WORKSHOPS

## MINDOLO ECUMENICAL FOUNDATION ANNOUNCES NEW PEACE PROGRAMME

In response to the many conflicts both internal and external, which are impacting the church in Africa, Mindolo Ecumenical Foundation is pleased to announce the inauguration of certificate and diploma level courses in Peace Building and Conflict Transformation. Historically, most Africans inter-ested in developing skills in peace building, mediation and conflict resolution have been trained off the continent. This new programme is an attempt to firmly root training in the African context, thereby preparing church leaders to enter the new millennium with the necessary skills to usher in the Ecumenical Decade to Overcome Violence. According to the WCC's eighth Assembly in Harare, this next decade should promote WCC's work with churches on issues of peace, human rights and reconciliation.

Towards this end, Mindolo is pleased to announce a Diploma in Peace Building and Conflict Transformation Diploma Programme from February to October, 2000.

Mindolo is one of the centres belonging to the Association of Christian Lay Centres in Africa (ACLCA). Since 1958, Mindolo has offered a variety of training programmes including women and youth leadership in a Pan African setting.

The objectives of this new peace programme will be to provide participants with a theoretical knowledge of the dynamics of conflict, the necessary communication skills for resolving conflict, the skills needed to intervene in as a third party in a variety of settings, and the ability to design and facilitate workshops in conflict resolution.

*If you or your church are interested in participating in this new ecumenical initiative please contact: The Registrar or the Peace Programme directly at Mindolo Ecumenical Foundation, Box 21493, Kitwe, Zambia (Telephone: 02-219008, Fax: 02-211001) or e-mail: mef.peace@copper-net.zm*

*Janet P. Schmidt, Peace Education Lecturer c/o Mindolo Ecumenical Foundation Box 21493, Kitwe, Zambia E-mail: mef.peace@coppernet.zm*

## *RESPONDING TO CONFLICT* IS OFFERING THE FOLLOWING COURSES AND WORKSHOPS

### WORKING WITH CONFLICT 1ST MAY - 7TH JULY 2000

A highly practical, experience-based course for people working in areas of instability and conflict. Especially suitable for NGO staff, aid workers, those concerned with rights, relief, reconstruction and development. Includes conflict analysis, group dynamics, negotiation, mediation, trauma, confidence-building, conflict prevention and much else.

Places limited. Some scholarships available.
Applications now for courses based in the UK.
This is a ten week course.
Modules can be taken individually if required.
Priority will be given to people doing the whole course.

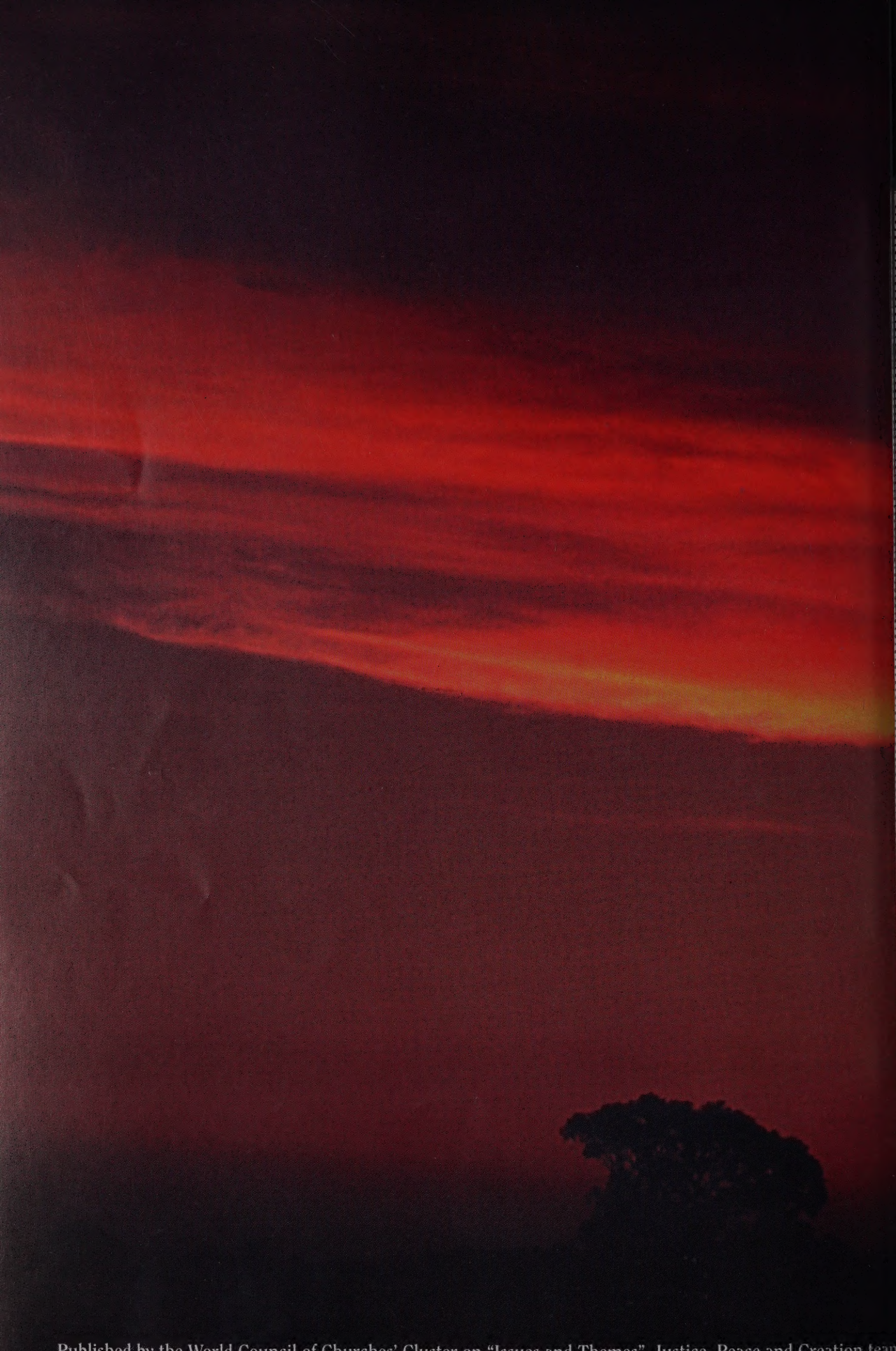
### STRENGTHENING POLICY AND PRACTICE IN AREAS OF CONFLICT 17TH - 21ST JULY 2000

Primarily for staff of agencies concerned with relief, development, rights and peace-building programmes.

This workshop will provide practical models and methods to assist aid agency staff to analyse conflicts, and to integrate effective conflict-handling strategies into their programmes.

Responding to Conflict also offers, on request, local workshops and consultancies in English, French or Spanish. For more information, please contact RTC, Selly Oak Colleges (NI), 1046 Bristol Road, Birmingham B29 6LJ, UK.
Tel: (+44)(0)121 415 5641.
Fax: (+44)(0)121 415 4119. E-mail: enquiries@respond.org
Website: www.respond.org/

*Responding to Conflict provides opportunities for individuals and organisations to develop new ways of working on conflict.*
Registered charity no. 1015906



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